South Haven Tribune

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July 19, 2026

SH school board adds millage to November ballot

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven school board approved an operating millage to be put on the November ballot during Wednesday night's meeting.

If approved, it will allow the district to continue levying the same 18-mill operating tax it has received annually since 1994, when Proposal A was enacted.

Chief Financial Officer Nancy Nelson said the proposal does not affect owners of primary residences, as they are exempt from the operating millage. The 18-mill operating tax is levied only on non-homestead properties, such as businesses, rental properties, second homes and vacant land.

School operating millage rates are required to be rolled back when property values increase faster than the rate of inflation as part of Michigan's Headlee Amendment.

State law classifies this as a tax increase, even though the proposal would only restore the district's operating millage to its previously authorized 18-mill level.

Field of dreams

Justin Flessner and Jim Horan presented a proposal to the South Haven school board for a new sports complex to be built on 14th Avenue in South Haven.

"We put a board together about a year ago and it's something that we just decided we wanted to try to help the community out with," Flessner said.

The complex, which is being called Field of Dreams, will feature two baseball fields, two softball fields, a football field, open multi-use practice field, shaded bleachers, a concessions stand, bathrooms, playground, walking nature trail, storage, batting cages, expanded parking and an indoor practice facility.

"This project is not just designed for baseball, softball," Flessner said. "We want this to be a community thing."

The complex will be focused on youth recreational sports, but the walking trail will be open to people of all ages. It will be set on a 40-acre lot with 10 acres of wetlands that will be preserved for wildlife.

The property was purchased by the South Haven Area Recreation Authority and the estimated total project cost is $8 million.

Flessner said the project will be done is phases and not all at once. The first phase will focus on getting one softball field and one baseball field up and ready to use. However, the other amenities including the concessions stand and playground will be built in a later phase.

The project is still in the planning phase and there is currently no set schedule for when each phase will be completed.

To learn more about the Field of Dreams project, go to shfieldofdreams.com or email jph104@hotmail.com.

See **BOARD**, page A2

ROBOTICS CAMP GETS CRACKING

South Haven Emergency Services assisted middle school and high school students with an egg drop experiment at the free summer Robotic Skills Camp.

Photos provided / Tom Renner

Cyclosporiasis hits tri-county area

Intestinal illness cases pop up in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren

By LOUISE WREGE
Paxton Media Group

BENTON TOWNSHIP — The intestinal illness that causes explosive diarrhea has reached Southwest Michigan, with 23 cases reported so far in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

In Michigan, cyclosporiasis has been confirmed in 3,309 cases as of Tuesday – a significant increase from the 170 cases reported on June 30 by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. As of July 9, 44 people had been hospitalized with the illness. The first case was reported to the state on June 22.

In a typical year, the state sees 40-50 cases of cyclosporiasis, according to MDHHS.

So far, the number of cases of cyclosporiasis that have been confirmed locally are seven in Berrien County, 12 in Van Buren County and four in Cass County.

The ailment is caused by the cyclospora parasite, which can't be seen with the naked eye, according to Sara Palmer, an epidemiologist with the Berrien County Health Department.

"You have to use a microscope to see it," Palmer said.

She said local health departments are working with state and federal officials to find the source of the parasite, which in the past has been traced back to people eating foods that contain the parasite such as lettuce, salad greens, raspberries, snow peas, green onions or fresh cilantro and basil.

"It's really a multi-agency type of investigation when we're dealing with something like this," Palmer said.

She said MDHHS put out a news release Monday, saying that even though they have not found the cause, current results point to lettuce or salad greens.

"That does not definitively show that that's the cause. It does not rule out other possible sources," Palmer cautioned.

She said the health department is making sure local doctors are on the lookout for cyclosporiasis cases and have access to the test, which is not a routine test.

"It's not something that our physicians see often so it's not the first thing on their radar," Palmer said. "There's lots of things that cause diarrhea – lots of things that are more common. We do see a lot of different diarrheal illnesses in the summertime."

Palmer said the local health departments contact people with the illness to find out what they have eaten over the past two weeks because it can take that long to develop symptoms after eating food that contains the parasite.

"That food history is really the critical piece of the investigation," Palmer said. "... Most people have trouble remembering what they ate a week or two ago."

Another problem is that

See **CYCLOSPORIASIS**, page A2

South Haven launches facade improvement program

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Downtown Development Authority recently announced the launch of its new Facade Improvement Program.

According to a news release, the program is an initiative designed to enhance the appearance of commercial properties, encourage private investment and strengthen the overall character of the community's business districts.

"The program will provide eligible business and property owners with financial assistance for exterior building improvements, helping create a more vibrant, attractive, and welcoming environment for residents, visitors and investors," the release stated.

Eligible improvements may include:

- Masonry restoration
- Repair or replace windows, doors, walls, or other appropriate architectural elements
- Exterior lighting
- Restoration of historical elements
- Materials and labor for work performed in association with the above-mentioned improvements

"This program is an investment in the future of our community," DDA Director Sue Brock said in the release. "By helping businesses improve their storefronts and building exteriors, we're supporting economic growth, encouraging revitalization and creating spaces that people are proud to visit and do business in."

The Façade Improvement Program is intended to:

- Stimulate economic development
- Preserve and enhance community character
- Increase property values
- Encourage long-term

See **IMPROVEMENT**, page A2

Michigan State Police investigate death of Bloomingdale man

By TRIBUNE STAFF

BLOOMINGDALE — Michigan State Police are investigating the death of a Bloomingdale man after he became unresponsive during a traffic stop by officers from the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office.

According to a news release, on July 8 members of the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Unit and Uniform Response Division observed a Ford pickup truck commit multiple traffic violations. Detectives also recognized the driver as an individual they believed to have a suspended driver's license.

"During the stop, investigators observed the driver appeared to ingest an unknown substance before taking a drink from a beverage," the release stated. "As deputies approached the vehicle, they observed the driver appear to ingest a second quantity of an unknown substance."

The driver, Nathan Matthews, a 41-year-old male from Bloomingdale, was

See **INVESTIGATION**, page A2

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

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Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

OBITUARY

Alvin Eugene Gumpert

July 2, 1929 –July 15, 2026

Alvin Eugene Gumpert, 97 of South Haven, passed away on Wednesday, July 15, 2026. Born in South Haven, Mich. on July 2, 1929 to Carl and Grace Gumpert. United in marriage on Jan. 9, 1949 to Alice Gumpert.

Alvin is survived by his wife of 77 years Alice and seven children; Judy (David) Andrews, Alvin (Sara) Gumpert Jr., Janet (Bill) Chambers, James (Cyndy) Gumpert, Susan (Ken) West, Lisa (Jimmy) Kolberg, Lori (Chuck) Benedict, 16 Grandchildren and 16 Great Grandchildren.

Preceded in death by his parents Carl and Grace Gumpert, two Sisters and four brothers.

Alvin met and married his high school sweetheart Alice. He proudly served his country with the Michigan National Guard and retired after 20 years service with a final grade of Master Sergeant. Alvin retired from his position as Plant Maintenance Engineer at Bohn Aluminum after 35 years.

He was a strong yet gentle man, caring, giving, respected and loved by everyone who knew him. Alvin was an avid golfer and bowler, never a quitter. Faith and family were very important to Alvin. He has been a member of Trinity Lutheran Church of Bangor since 2003.

He truly appreciated life, was always positive and felt blessed. His strength of character and loving spirit will be forever remembered and missed by his family and friends.

The family would like to thank Kristin Glynn for her loving support and care of Mom and Dad.

Visitation for Alvin will take place from 10:30 a.m. until the time of the funeral service at 11 a.m. on Monday, July 20 at Trinity Lutheran Church 115 E. Monroe St. Bangor, Michigan 49013. Pastor Stephen Daley will officiate. Alvin will be laid to rest at Lakeview Cemetery in South Haven.

Donations in honor of Alvin may be made to Trinity Lutheran Church.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence please visit: www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

IMPROVEMENT

From page A1

business investment

■ Improve the visual appeal of commercial corridors and downtown areas

Funding assistance will be offered through a matching grant/reimbursement program, with awards of up to $20,000 per eligible project.

Applications will be evaluated based on project impact, visibility and alignment with community development objectives.

Funding is available with a maximum annual budget allocation of $20,000 per fiscal year.

Applications for the program will open on Aug. 1 and interested property owners and businesses are encouraged to apply early.

Program guidelines, eligibility requirements and application materials can be found on the city's website at www.southhavenmi.gov.

For questions and more information, contact Sue Brock at 269-637-0706 or via email at sbrock@southhavenmi.gov.

CYCLOSPORIASIS

From page A1

people usually eat a lot of fruits and vegetables together, which makes it difficult to figure out which one is the source.

"We've had historical outbreaks where they thought maybe salsa was a source and it turned out to be cilantro," she said.

Palmer said the food history gathered by the health departments is sent to the state, where officials look for patterns in the foods people with the illness have eaten and if they got the food from a restaurant or grocery store.

"What brands are they? What farms did they grow on? All of that," she said. "We have a really complicated food system in how our food is grown and distributed. That trace-back process is really complicated."

She said that sometimes, they don't find a source of the parasite.

Palmer said anyone with frequent bouts of watery diarrhea that lasts several days should see their doctor.

"This infection is rarely fatal, but it can cause serious illness and it also can cause a long duration illness if it's not treated," she said. "... People can recover without treatment, but it can be a long course of illness before you feel better if you're not treated."

Besides diarrhea, she said common symptoms are dehydration, cramping, abdominal pain, gas and bloating.

She said people with underlying health conditions and the very old and very young can have the most problems with cyclosporiasis.

Palmer said the illness isn't typically spread person-to-person.

"After it's shed in stool, it needs to hang out in the environment at a certain temperature and humidity for a few days to a week before it becomes infectious," Palmer said.

She said cooking food at 158 degrees will kill the parasite.

Food that is not cooked such as zucchini should be thoroughly scrubbed with a scrub brush, she said.

Palmer said raspberries have been a frequent source of infections in the past because their bumpy surface makes them hard to clean.

She said MDHHS is working with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Food & Drug Administration to find the source.

At least 34 states have reported cases of cyclosporiasis, according to the CDC.

MDHHS updates the total number of cases of the illness on its website Monday through Friday. The number of people hospitalized and the number of cases per county are usually updated weekly on Thursdays.

Contact: lwrege@TheHP.com, 932-0361, Twitter: @HPWrege

INVESTIGATION

From page A1

removed from the vehicle. Detectives observed suspected narcotics residue on Matthews' shirt and on the seat of the vehicle. When questioned, Matthews denied ingesting any narcotics or being in possession of illegal drugs.

A search of the vehicle resulted in the discovery of additional evidence consistent with methamphetamine. Because detectives were concerned about what Matthews may have ingested, they repeatedly asked him what substance he had consumed. Matthews continued to deny ingesting anything.

"Based on the detectives' observations and the evidence recovered during the traffic stop, deputies transported Matthews to Bronson Lakeview Hospital for medical evaluation as a precaution," the release stated. "While deputies were assisting Matthews from the patrol vehicle into the emergency department, he became unresponsive. Deputies immediately administered two doses of Narcan while hospital staff responded to the patrol vehicle and began providing emergency medical care."

Despite lifesaving efforts by deputies and hospital personnel, Matthews was later pronounced deceased by Bronson Lakeview doctors.

"Consistent with standard protocol whenever an in-custody death occurs following law enforcement contact, the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office immediately requested the Michigan State Police to conduct an independent investigation into the incident," the release stated.

The Michigan State Police will investigate the circumstances surrounding the death, including interviews with witnesses and the involved deputies and detectives.

The case will be forwarded to the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office for review after the investigation is finished.

No further information is being released at this time as the investigation remains active.

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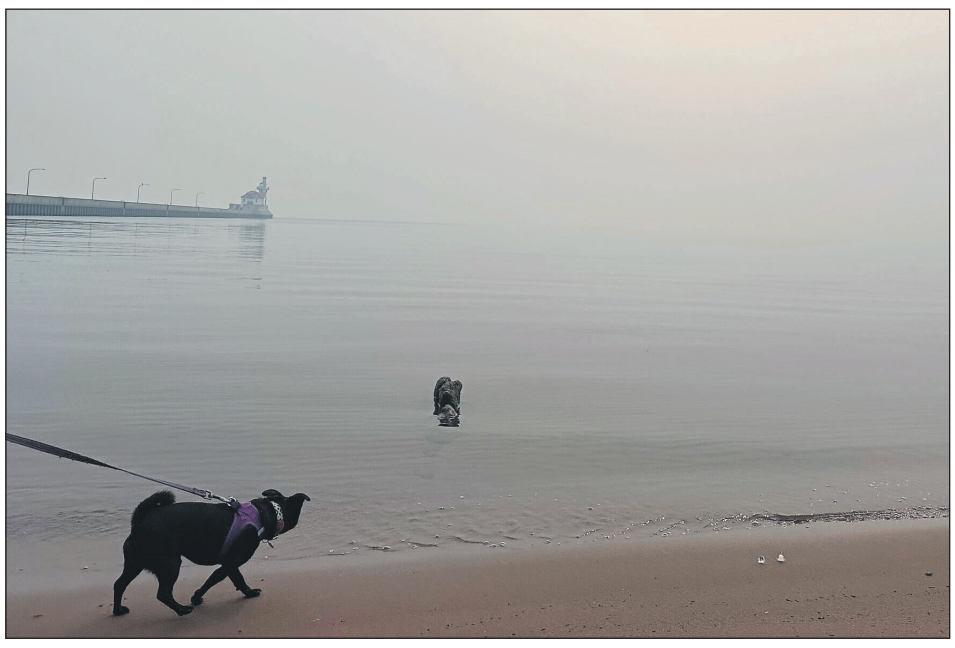
Canadian wildfire smoke turns air hazardous in the Midwest

By TAMMY WEBBER and PHILIP MARCELO
Associated Press



Scott Bauer / AP

A dog walks along the shores of Lake Superior amid heavy wildfire smoke Thursday, in Duluth, Minn.

NEW YORK — Heavy, pungent smoke from Canadian wildfires darkened skies in the U.S. on Thursday, from the Great Lakes to parts of the East Coast, reducing visibility for commuters and prompting warnings about air quality that made outdoor activities dangerous.

Detroit's air quality was among the worst in the world for major cities, as a lingering high pressure system trapped smoke from dozens of fires in Canada and northern Minnesota and winds from the northwest blew it into Michigan, said Steven Freitag, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Pontiac, Michigan.

"Sure enough, it arrived in force here and it's really pretty extreme levels," said Freitag, who noted that visibility in some areas was reduced to a half mile.

Some other cities across the Great Lakes states also registered air quality ranging from unhealthy to hazardous. Fine particles in smoke are especially dangerous for children and people with health conditions such as asthma and heart disease.

In the New York City area, a thick, gloomy haze tinged the morning sky in orange-and-yellow, reducing visibility so dramatically that it partly obscured Manhattan's prominent skyline.

City officials opened cooling centers as health officials urged New Yorkers to limit strenuous and prolonged outdoor activities and to stick to air-conditioned spaces as much as possible.

State officials distributed tens of thousands of face masks designed to filter out 95 percent of tiny airborne particles, including dust and smog, at the city's Penn Station and Grand Central transit hubs and other major locations.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani said public schools, parks and other city agencies were adjusting programming, moving activities indoors, rescheduling events and adjusting operations as air quality was expected to worsen as the day progressed.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation issued a statewide air quality health advisory.

The agency said there was a potential for temporary spikes of "very unhealthy" air quality from Buffalo in the state's western corner to Rochester by Lake Ontario, Syracuse in the central region, down to the greater New York City area.

BOARD

From page A1

Other items

The board also approved the 2026-2027 handbook.

Three new hires were approved by the board Wednesday night, including:

■ Lincoln Elementary School third-grade teacher Jessica Ingraham.

■ Lincoln Elementary School special education teacher, resource intensive classroom Coleen Cloward.

■ South Haven High School dean of students Danny Jennings.

The board approved the cross-country team overnight trip.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

The Spotlight

A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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DayDreamer Domes unveils Rituals at Lunara spa

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently celebrated the opening of Rituals at Lunara, DayDreamer Domes' new spa.

According to a news release, the chamber hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at the new wellness destination, located at 397 Blue Star Highway in South Haven.

"Already known for its luxury glamping experience, DayDreamer Domes has expanded its offerings with the addition of Rituals at Lunara, a thoughtfully curated wellness retreat designed to help guests relax, restore and reconnect," the release stated.

Inspired by the healing power of nature and intentional self-care, Rituals at Lunara offers personalized wellness experiences, including restorative bodywork, rejuvenating facials, detoxifying body treatments, energy healing, float therapy, sound bed sessions and private sauna experiences.

"Each ritual is tailored to the individual, creating a peaceful escape that complements the beauty and tranquility of the DayDreamer Domes property," the release stated.

Nestled on 150 scenic acres just minutes from downtown South Haven, DayDreamer Domes has become a one-of-a-kind destination that blends luxury accommodations with outdoor adventure and wellness experiences.

The addition of Rituals at Lunara further enhances the property's mission of creating meaningful experiences where guests can slow down, reconnect with nature and leave feeling refreshed and renewed.

DayDreamer Domes unveils Rituals at Lunara wellness destination in South Haven.
Photos provided

"The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce congratulates the DayDreamer Domes team on the opening of Rituals at Lunara and is proud to celebrate this exciting expansion," the release stated.

Appointments are open to everyone, guests do not need to be staying at DayDreamer Domes to enjoy the wellness experiences offered at Rituals at Lunara.

To learn more about Rituals at Lunara or to book a wellness experience, go to www.daydreamerdomes.com/spa.

Rituals at Lunara offers personalized wellness experiences, including restorative bodywork, energy healing, float therapy and sound bed sessions.

Flywheelers Museum seeking items for auction

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Flywheelers Museum is now accepting items for its upcoming farm machinery auction on Sept. 13.

According to a news release, the auction will take place at 9:30 a.m. during the museum's Antique Engine and Tractor Show.

Organizers are seeking donations and consignments of farm machinery, antique tractors, gas and steam engines and related agricultural items for the auction.

The auction is a fundraiser for the non-profit museum. Proceeds from the event will help fund ongoing educational programming and major museum expansions, including the final construction phases of the Black River Railroad grand-scale steam train project and the new entrance ticket booth and gift shop facility.

"Whether you have a vintage tractor looking for a new home or classic barn finds, this auction provides an excellent platform for sellers and buyers while directly supporting the museum's preservation mission," Museum President Patrick Ingalls said in the release.

Auction items can be either sold on consignment or donated to the museum to auction. Consignment fee is 18 percent. No household items accepted.

Persons attending the auction have to pay admission to the Antique Engine and Tractor Show which runs Sept. 10-13. Sunday admission is $5 with kids 12 and under free with paid admission.

For more information on the auction, contact Director Jason Adams at 269-650-3267.

The Michigan Flywheelers Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of antique gas and steam engines, tractors, and historic farm machinery. It is located at 06285 68th Street, South Haven, Michigan.

SH performance series welcomes Vox GR ensemble

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Performance Series will continue its 2026 series with a performance by West Michigan's premier professional choral ensemble Vox GR on July 24.

According to a news release, the concert will begin at 7 p.m. is hosted by Peace Lutheran Church, 06321 Blue Star Memorial Highway in South Haven.

"Our Performance Series is delighted to welcome back an exceptional choral ensemble, Vox GR, to perform the third concert in our 2026 season," South Haven Performance Series President Robert Linstrom said in the release. "We have been privileged to host Vox GR for our annual holiday concerts in 2024 and 2025, and we are pleased to bring them back to South Haven for a summertime audience. The exceptional quality of this choral ensemble's performances is genuinely exciting and we are sure that this concert will a highlight of our 2026 season."

Photo provided
The South Haven Performance Series will continue its 2026 Series with a performance by choral ensemble Vox GR on July 24.

For their 2026 summer tour, Vox GR presents "Western Edge of the World," exploring songs about travel, seeking and finding. The repertoire includes two selections by Haitian composer Sydney Guillaume, J. S. Bach's joyful motet Lobet den Herrn and Stephen Paulus' setting of poems by Edna St. Vincent Milay. The main work of the program is To the Field of Stars by Gabriel Jackson which follows the westward pilgrimage of the Camino de Santiago.

Vox GR, led by Artistic Director Dr. Christopher Mason, was formed in 2022 and all the ensemble's members are professional singers who reside in Michigan. Vox GR performs a wide range of choral music stretching across all eras from composers of diverse backgrounds.

"Vox GR has the mission of enriching West Michigan through compelling performances, community music making, and educational engagement for diverse populations," the release stated. "They seek to transform their audience with high-caliber choral music that moves the heart, engages the intellect and honors our diversity."

Vox GR was named the 2024 American Prize second place winner in the Professional Choir Division. The American Prize program rewards the best recorded performances by individual artists and ensembles in the United States at the professional, community/amateur, college, university, church and school levels.

The ensemble is directed by Christopher Mason, director of choral activities at the University of Minnesota Duluth where he directs the flagship University Singers and teaches secondary choral methods, conducting and ear training.

"Founded in 2010, the South Haven Performance Series is an all-volunteer community-based organization committed to providing a rich mixture of musical arts for area residents and visitors," the release stated. "Most concerts are held during the spring and summer months with an additional holiday concert presented annually in December."

Performances are provided thanks to the support of the South Haven Community Foundation, corporate sponsors and individual donors.

A $15 admission fee is charged for the spring and summer concerts while the holiday concert is presented free of charge as a gift to the community. Students are always admitted free.

Tickets are sold on the evening of the concert.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Michigan agencies grant permits for Line 5 oil pipeline tunnel project

By BETH LEBLANC
The Detroit News (TNS)

LANSING — Two state agencies issued permits Wednesday necessary for the construction of a 4-mile-long tunnel beneath the Straits of Mackinac to house a new segment of the controversial Line 5 oil pipeline.

The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy announced Tuesday it had reissued a wetlands permit for Enbridge's Great Lakes Tunnel Project after a roughly 16-month review; and the Department of Natural Resources, a short time later, announced it had granted a permit related to the tunnel project's effect on rare plants and animals.

The Canadian oil pipeline company had previously secured the EGLE permit for construction, but it expired as the state and Enbridge trudged through roughly eight years of litigation over the project.

"The review concluded that the public and private need for the proposed activity outweighed other public interest criteria," the environmental department said in a statement Wednesday.

The DNR, in a statement, said its permit requires Enbridge to make efforts to reduce impacts on rare plants and animals. The project, the agency said, would have an adverse impact on Houghton's goldenrod and the dwarf lake iris, both of which are considered threatened at the state and federal levels, as well as several bat habitats.

The natural resources agency eventually "concluded that the impacts at this site are unlikely to prevent the overall recovery of either plant species."

Enbridge said the permit approvals are "an important step forward for a project designed to further protect the Great Lakes while helping ensure the uninterrupted flow of energy that supports Michigan and the region.

"We are reviewing the new permit conditions issued today to assess any impacts on tunnel construction," said Ryan Duffy, a spokesman for Enbridge.

The decision was criticized by the Oil & Water Don't Mix coalition, which has fought the project for several years over concerns about the presence of oil moving through the Great Lakes. The group, on Tuesday, took aim at Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's administration in its statement.

"Gov. Whitmer has had the power to reject Enbridge's tunnel scheme, but her administration has chosen to cozy up to Big Oil rather than put Michiganders' needs and the health of the Great Lakes first," said David Holtz, of Oil & Water Don't Mix.

Whitmer's administration previously revoked Enbridge's easement through the Great Lakes and sought a court order to support the revocation. That effort was unsuccessful and, since then, Whitmer has been largely quiet on the issue as Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel took the lead on separate litigation seeking the pipeline's closure.

U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Detroit, joined a host of environmental groups expressing disappointment in the decision.

"Michigan's Governor, @GovWhitmer, ran on a campaign promise to shutdown Line 5. Remember that?" Tlaib said on social media. "Today, after 70,000 comments submitted opposing the permit, she greenlit oil in our Great Lakes. Shameful."

The environmental department's review of Enbridge's permit application, EGLE said Tuesday, included 70,000 public comments, a public hearing and a public information session, as well as meetings with the state's Tribal Nations, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan History Center, and the State Historic Preservation Office.

"As a condition of the permit, Enbridge will be required to submit an improved wetland mitigation plan to address wetland impacts," the agency said. "The permit also includes new conditions designed to mitigate impacts to cultural resources in the area."

The agency continues to review a separate permit renewal application related to water discharge during construction, EGLE said in its statement.

The permits come as litigation over the pipeline's future continues to proceed at both the state and federal levels, with a mixed bag of decisions on a variety of procedural and more substantive issues in the case.

Enbridge also has secured approvals for the tunnel project for the project from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Michigan Public Service Commission. The MPSC permit currently is being challenged before the Michigan Supreme Court.

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF VAN BUREN

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

FILE NO. 2026-1093-DE

Estate of Nenita Co Figuaracion
Date of birth: 03/02/1936

TO ALL CREDITORS: *
The decedent, Nenita Co Figuaracion died 08/19/2025. Creditors of the decedent individually or as the Trustor of the Nenita C. Figuracion Trust, Dated September 20, 1993, are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Angeli F. Certa, at 917 Phoenix St., South Haven, MI 49090, personal representative and trustee, or to both the probate court at 212 E Paw Paw St #220, Paw Paw, MI 49079, and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Nenita Co Figuaracion died 08/19/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Angeli F. Certa, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E Paw Paw St #220, Paw Paw, MI 49079, and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 0909/2026

Attorney name:
William E. Westerbeke
Bar no. P65185
728 Pleasant St. Ste 102
St. Joseph, MI 49085
269-906-9782

Personal representative:
Angeli F. Certa
917 Phoenix St
South Haven, MI 49090
269-615-1842

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
VAN BUREN COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-1095-DE
Susan Metzger P62867

Court address:
212 E. Paw Paw, St., Ste 220
Paw Paw, MI 49079
Court phone no.
269-657-8225

Estate of:
Jimmy Russell Hayes Sr.
Date of birth: 08/19/1966

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Jimmy Russell Hayes Sr. died 02/20/2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Jimmy Russell Hayes Jr. personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw, St., Ste 220 Paw Paw, MI 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 07/09/2026

Personal Representative
Jimmy Russell Hayes Jr.
67031 CR 376
Bangor MI 49013
269-208-6691

0900 LEGALS

Neil E. South and Gloria A. South Trust

To All Creditors:
The settlor, Neil E. South born on January 28, 1939, who lived at 401 N. Brown St., Paw Paw, MI died on June 20th, 2026. There is no personal representative of the settlor's estate to whom Letter of Administration have been issued.
Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against Neil E. South personally and/or the Neil E. South and Gloria A. South Trust dated 05/10/2001 are amended, will forever be banned unless presented to Julie L. Benner Successor Trustee, within four (4) months after the date of publication. Notice is further given that the Trust will thereafter be assigned and distributed to the persons entitled to it.

By Julie L. Benner
signed by the Trustee.

Public Notice
Geneva Township

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN office hours for early voting will be Saturday, August 1, 2026, 8 am to 4 pm.

Brandie Rainey
Geneva Township Clerk

Extra Business is as easy as asking for it!
DO IT HERE, DO IT NOW!

0900 LEGALS

NOTICE TO THE CREDITORS OF DECEDENT'S TRUST:
Decedent/settlor, Rosemary A. Thurber, date of birth October 7, 1931, who died June 8, 2026, who was a resident of South Haven, Van Buren County. No probate estate is currently anticipated for the decedent. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the Rosemary A. Thurber Trust dated August 12, 1988, restated April 13, 2015, will be forever barred unless presented to Greenleaf Trust, Successor Trustee of Rosemary A. Thurber Trust, within four months after the date of publication of this notice.

Dated: July 10, 2026

Successor Trustee:
Greenleaf Trust
211 S. Rose Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269)388-9800

SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP SYNOPSIS
REGULAR MEETING JULY 8, 2026

PRESENT: Poole, Wiatrowski, Fisher, Lewandowski, Bertorelli, Stein, and DeGrandchamp
Motion to approve June 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes.
Gail Gladney gave a report for VBCounty Commission.
Motion to approve the Agenda with the addition of New Business 8.C. Budget Amendments
Motion to approve the insurance renewal with Acrisure.
Motion to set a Public Hearing for the Fire Millage for August 12th, 2026, at 7:30 p.m.
Motion to approve the Budget Amendments as presented.
Reports were received. W.C.Askew from the Road Commission was in attendance.
Motion to approve payment of bills in the amount of $41,517.21
Meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk

PRIMARY ELECTION

TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS:
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Michigan Primary Election will be held in the City of Bangor, TOWNSHIPS of Arlington, Bangor, Columbia, Covert, Geneva, South Haven, County of Van Buren; City of South Haven, Counties of Van Buren & Allegan; State of Michigan within said City or Township on
Tuesday, August 4, 2026, 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.
At the places of HOLDING the ELECTION in said CITY/TOWNSHIP as indicated below, VIZ...

CITY OF BANGOR	257 West Monroe Street, Bangor
CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN	539 Phoenix Street, South Haven
ARLINGTON TOWNSHIP HALL	52022 34th Avenue, Bangor
BANGOR TOWNSHIP HALL	32550 CR 687, Bangor
COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP HALL	53053 CR 388 Grand Junction
COVERT TOWNSHIP HALL	73943 Lake Street, Covert
GENEVA TOWNSHIP HALL	62127 CR 380, Bangor
SOUTH HAVEN TOWNSHIP HALL	09761 Blue Star Highway

FOR THE PURPOSE of Nominating Candidates of the Libertarian, Democratic & Republican Parties for Partisan Offices, VIZ.:

State	Governor
Congressional	U.S. Senator & U.S. Representative
Legislative	State Senator & State Representative
County	County Commissioner

Delegates to the County Convention of the Republican and Democratic Parties.
Also to vote on the following proposition(s) listed below:
VAN BUREN COUNTY Public Safety Millage Renewal Proposal
This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue to levy 0.5332 mill, which was previously approved by the electors to fund drug enforcement and road patrol services, but which expired with the 2021 levy. As a renewal of previously authorized millage which expired with the 2021 levy, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in Van Buren County be increased by 0.5332 mill ($0.5332 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of five (5) years, 2022 to 2026, inclusive, for the exclusive purpose of providing funds for the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office for Drug Enforcement and Road Patrol? A portion of the revenue collected may be required to be distributed to the Downtown Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing Authorities, Local Development Financing Authorities and Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities established in South Haven City, Bangor City, Hartford, City, Gobles City, Keeler Township, South Haven Township, Villages of Lawrence, Lawton, Paw Paw and Mattawan. It is estimated that 0.5332 mill would raise approximately $1,884,933 when first levied in 2022.
Van Buren County AMBULANCE MILLAGE RENEWAL PROPOSAL
This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue to levy 0.9370 mill, which was previously approved by the electors to fund ambulance services, but which will expire with the 2022 levy. As a renewal of previously authorized millage which will expire with the 2022 levy, shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in Van Buren County be increased by 0.9370 mill ($0.9370 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of four (4) years, 2023 to 2026, inclusive, for the exclusive purpose of providing funds for ambulance services? A portion of the revenue collected may be required to be distributed to the Downtown Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing Authorities, Local Development Financing Authorities and Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities established in South Haven City, Bangor City, Hartford, City, Gobles City, Keeler Township, South Haven Township, Villages of Lawrence, Lawton, Paw Paw and Mattawan.
VAN BUREN CONSERVATION DISTRICT MILLAGE RENEWAL PROPOSAL
As a renewal of previously authorized millage which expired with the 2025 levy, the question presented in this ballot proposal is - Shall the expired previously voted increase in the tax limitation imposed under Article IX, Sec. 6 of the Michigan Constitution in Van Buren County, Michigan, of 0.1000 mill ($0.10 per $1,000 of Taxable Value), reduced to 0.0989 mills ($0.0989 per $1,000 taxable value) by the required millage rollbacks, be renewed at up to 0.0989 ($0.0989 per $1,000 taxable value) for a period of ten (10) years, 2026 through 2035 inclusive, for the sole purpose of funding Van Buren Conservation District programs including assisting landowners in the protection, enhancement, and restoration of natural resources, assist agricultural producers in the protection of soil and water and implementation of best management practices on farmland, increase household hazardous waste and recycling collection opportunities, and continue water quality initiatives, within the boundaries of Van Buren County?
City of South Haven CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ENFORCEMENT MILLAGE PROPOSAL
Shall the previously voted increase in the limitation on general ad valorem taxes within the City of South Haven, Michigan, to fund activities to enforce laws in the City of South Haven which prohibit or control the manufacture, sale, delivery and use of "controlled substances" as defined by applicable state laws, rules and regulations, as reduced by the required millage rollback, be renewed at 0.6508 mill ($0.6508 per $1,000 of taxable value) and increased by 0.0492 mill ($0.0492 per $1,000 of taxable value), for a total of 0.70 mill ($0.70 per $1,000 of taxable value), for a period of five (5) years, 2027 through 2031, inclusive, and shall the City of South Haven be authorized to levy this millage annually on all taxable property within the City of South Haven, thereby raising an estimated $467,150 in the first year of the levy?
City of Bangor Senior Services Millage
"Shall the tax limitation imposed under Article IX, Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution on general ad valorem taxes and Public Act 39 of 1976, within the City of Bangor be increased to 1 mil ($1.00 per $1,000 of taxable value) for the 8 year period of 2022 through 2029 inclusive (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029) for the purpose of providing funds to be paid to Senior Services of Van Buren County, Inc. for providing activities and general senior services pursuant to Public Act 39 of 1976 for individuals 60 years of age or older; and shall the city be authorized to levy such increase in millage for said purpose, thereby raising in the first year an estimated $36,46.074.
Arlington Township Senior Services
Shall the tax limitation imposed under Article IX, Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution on general ad valorem taxes and Public Act 39 of 1976, within the Township of Arlington be increased to 1 mill ($1.00 per #1000 of taxable value) for the purpose of providing funds to be paid to Senior Services of Van Buren County, Inc. for providing activities and general senior services pursuant to the public Act 39 of 1976 for individuals 60 years of age or older; and shall the Township be authorized to levy such increase in millage for said purpose thereby raising in the first year an estimated $69,406.30.
Bangor Township Road Millage
Shall the previously voted millage of 4 mils ($4.00 per $1,000 of taxable value), in the tax limitation, imposed under Article IX Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution on general ad valorem taxes within the Township of Bangor, as reduced by the required millage rollback which last resulted in a levy of 3.9624 mils ($3.9624 per $1,000 of taxable value) on all real and personal property in Bangor Township, Van Buren County, Michigan, which expires in 2026, be renewed at the original voted 4 mils ($4.00 per $1,000 of taxable value) for the four (4) year period of 2027 through 2030 inclusive for the purpose of appropriating funds for road maintenance and construction within the unincorporated portions of the Township of Bangor; and shall the township levy such renewal in millage, thereby raising in the first year of levy an estimated $400,974?
Bangor Public Schools OPERATING MILLAGE PROPOSAL
Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all property, except principal residence and other property exempted by law, in Bangor Public Schools, Van Buren County, Michigan, be increased by 3 mills ($3.00 on each $1,000 of taxable valuation) for a period of 9 years, 2026 to 2034, inclusive, to provide funds for operating purposes; the estimate of the revenue the school district will collect if the millage is approved and levied in 2026 is approximately $76,988 (this millage is to restore millage lost as a result of the reduction required by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and will be levied only to the extent necessary to restore that reduction)??"
South Haven Charter Township Road Millage Shall the tax limitation on all taxable property within the Charter Township of South Haven, Van Buren County, Michigan, be increased and the Township be authorized to renew a level of a millage in an amount not to exceed 1.45 mills ($ 1.45 on each $1,000 of taxable value) for four (4) years, 2026 to 2029inclusive, to provide funds for constructing, preserving, improving, mowing, repairing, and maintaining roads and ditches in the Township? The estimate of the revenue the Township will collect in the first year if the millage is approved and levied in the 2026 calendar year is approximately$373,461.
Notice Relative to Opening and Closing of the Polls Election Law, Act 116, P.A. 1954, Section 720. On the date of any election, the polls shall be opened by 7 o'clock in the forenoon and shall be continuously open until 8 o'clock in the afternoon and no longer. Every qualified elector present and in line at the polls at the hour prescribed for the closing thereof shall be allowed to vote.

BANGOR CITY CLERK	**SOUTH HAVEN CITY CLERK**	**ARLINGTON TWP CLERK**
Shelly Umbanhowar	Brittany Abrams	Susan Wilson
BANGOR TWP CLERK	**COLUMBIA TWP CLERK**	**COVERT TWP CLERK**
Annette Houdek	Kara Hartmann	Wednesday Pritchard
GENEVA TWP CLERK	**SOUTH HAVEN TWP CLERK**	
Brandie Rainey	Brenda Bertorelli	

0900 LEGALS

PUBLIC NOTICE
Bangor Township

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Public Accuracy Test to test the equipment that will be used for the August 4, 2026, Primary Election has been scheduled for **Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at 6:00 pm**, at Bangor Township Hall, 32550 CR 687, Bangor, Michigan 49013.
The Public Accuracy Test is conducted to demonstrate that the computer programming used to tabulate the votes cast at the election meets the requirements of Michigan Election Law.

Annette Houdek
Bangor Township Clerk

RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

0900 LEGALS

Public Notice
Geneva Township

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN
That the public accuracy test for the August primary election has been scheduled for Monday, July 20, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. in Township Hall Meeting Room, 62127 County Road 380 Bangor, MI 49013 The public accuracy test is conducted to demonstrate that the program and computer that will be used to tabulate the results of the election, counts the votes in the manner prescribed by law.

Brandie Rainey
Geneva Township Clerk

Classifieds Make a Cash Connection!

SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the South Haven Charter Township Planning Commission will conduct public hearings and regular meeting on Wednesday August 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the South Haven Township Hall, 09761 Blue Star Hwy, South Haven MI 49090.
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the items to be considered include the following:

1. Owner, Morris Investments South Haven LLC and Applicant, Pear Blossom Properties 5585, LLC have petitioned for a Special Use, to convert existing building to a museum at 05585 Blue Star Hwy, 80-17-360-003-00
2. Owner, 12th Avenue LLC and Applicant, Hidden Ponds RV Resort LLC have petitioned to amend the approved PUD (Planned Unit Development): removing 9 of the 12 home sites; adding 2.4 acres; adding 16 RV sites including extending interior road for the sites; buildings moved around from previous approved plan; combing 27 condominium sites and 3 separate parcels into one parcel for PUD site at 73234 12th Avenue 80-17-014-064-11.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the applications can be reviewed at the Township Hall during the zoning administrator hours Tues's 9-12p and Thurs's 1:30-4p; call 269-637-3305 or email to request shtwp.zoninga@gmail.com.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that written comments will be received from any interested person concerning the foregoing by the Township Clerk at the address set forth below, during regular business hours of regular business days or by mail to the Township Clerk at the address set forth below, up to the date of the hearing and will also be received by the Planning Commission at the hearing.

South Haven Charter Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to the South Haven Charter Township Clerk.

South Haven Charter Township Hall
Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk
09761 Blue Star Highway
South Haven, MI 49090
269-637-3305

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
Proceedings of the Regular City Council Meeting
Council Chambers, City Hall
7:00 p.m. July 6, 2026
THE FOLLOWING ARE NOT APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Present: Jeff Arnold, Tom Capps, Dave Flack, Mary Hosley, Eddie Polk, Letitia Wilkins, Annie Brown
Absent: None
Call to Order by Mayor Annie Brown at 7:00 p.m.
Motion by Arnold to approve the agenda. Second by Polk. Motion adopted unanimously.
Public Comment excluding items scheduled for public hearing was held.
Motion by Arnold to approve Consent Agenda Items A-I. Second by Polk. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Arnold, Capps, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Motion by Flack to consider adoption of Resolution 2026-27, A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION (MLCC) GRANT KHARGIE CAPITAL, LLC, DBA NEW PARK RESTAURANT GROUP (GASTROPUB) A SOCIAL DISTRICT PERMIT FOR USE AT 402 EAGLE STREET, WHICH IS WITHIN THE SOUTH HAVEN SOCIAL DISTRICT. Second by Arnold. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Arnold, Capps, Flack, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Motion by Hosley to approve Special Event Applications 2026-22 "Bark" BQ, 2026-23 3rd Annual Lowlight Music Festival, & 2026-24 Movie in the Park. Second by Polk. Motion adopted unanimously.
Motion by Hosley to consider the approval of a license agreement with Old Harbor Village Condominium Association Inc, JWILCO Properties LLC, SVEIKS, INC, to maintain commercial dumpsters on city property at the Williams Street parking lot. Second by Flack. Motion adopted unanimously.
Motion by Arnold to approve quotes from Lakefront Roofing & Exteriors to replace the roof, soffits, and fascia at the North Beach Concession in the amount of $18,087.27 and authorize staff to execute all necessary documents. Second by Capps. Motion adopted unanimously.
Motion by Hosley to adopt Resolution 2026-28, A RESOLUTION SETTING APUBLIC HEARING FOR WARNER VINEYARDS ON-PREMISE TASTING ROOM APPLICATION. Second by Polk. Roll Call Vote: Yes: Capps, Flack, Hosley, Polk, Wilkins, Arnold, Brown. No: None. Motion adopted.
Public Works Director Dana Burd gave an update regarding various Public Works projects.
City Manager Kate Hosier shared general updates.
Mayor and Councilpersons shared thoughts and comments.
Meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.
Brittany Abrams, City Clerk

NOTICE OF ELECTION
FOR THE STATE PRIMARY ELECTION TO BE HELD
AUGUST 4, 2026, CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN

TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN, VAN BUREN & ALLEGAN COUNTIES, MICHIGAN:
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the State Primary Election will be held in the City of South Haven in the Counties of Van Buren & Allegan, State of Michigan on:

Tuesday, August 4, 2026, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the following address:
City of South Haven City Hall
539 Phoenix Street
South Haven, Michigan 49090

FOR THE PURPOSE of Nominating candidates of the Democratic and Republican Parties for Partisan offices, Viz:
· United States Congressional Representative; United States Senator
· State Governor; State Senator; State Representative
· Delegate to the County Convention
· County Surveyor (Van Buren County)

And for the purpose of voting on the following proposals:
· VAN BUREN COUNTY Public Safety Millage Renewal Proposal
· VAN BUREN COUNTY Ambulance Millage Renewal Proposal
· VAN BUREN COUNTY Conservation District Millage Renewal Proposal
· ALLEGAN COUNTY Senior Citizen Services Millage Renewal Proposal
· CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN Controlled Substances Enforcement Millage Proposal

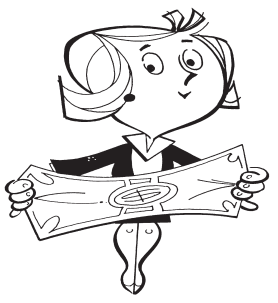
Sample ballots with the candidates and full text of the proposals can be obtained at the South Haven City Clerk's Office, 539 Phoenix St., South Haven, Michigan 49090 and at www.mi.gov/vote. The full text of each proposal may be obtained from the South Haven City Clerk's Office or at www.mi.gov/vote.
Early voting begins the second Saturday before each State and Federal election and ends the Sunday before the election. Early voting is at the Human Services Building 57418 C.R. 681, Hartford, MI 49057: Sat/Sun 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Mon/Tue/Thur/Fri 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Wed 12:00 pm-8:00 p.m.
Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact the South Haven City Clerk's Office during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday: (269) 637-0750.

Brittany Abrams, City of South Haven City Clerk

0900 LEGALS

Public Hearing South Haven Charter Township will host a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 12th, 2026 at the South Haven Twp Hall 09761 Blue Star Hwy at 7:30 pm. For the purpose of establishing the Fire and Ambulance Millage Rate for the 2026 tax year

MAKE SOME MONEY



IN THE CLASSIFIEDS TODAY!

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Area Emergency Services rescues a rider after losing control and falling down a steep embankment on the Kal-Haven Trail.

Rider rescued after fall on Kal-Haven Trail in South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Area Emergency Services recently responded to the Kal-Haven Trail after a rider lost control, slipped off the shoulder of the trail and fell 15–20 feet down a steep embankment.

According to a news release, emergency services assessed and stabilized the rider before utilizing specialized rope rescue techniques to safely bring the rider back up the embankment.

Due to limited vehicle access, a UTV was used to transport the rider one-half mile to a waiting ambulance for further evaluation and transport to the hospital.

"Incidents like this highlight the importance of ongoing training and maintaining specialized rescue capabilities," Chief Brandon Hinz said in the release. "We hope the rider makes a full and speedy recovery and we commend our firefighters and paramedics for their professionalism and teamwork during this rescue."

Hideaway Salon chosen for SH chamber's give back program

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed Hideaway Salon and Spa as a new chamber member.

According to a news release, the chamber held a ribbon cutting ceremony at their salon located at 250 Broadway St. in South Haven.

"Hideaway Salon and Spa combines professional expertise with a calming atmosphere, creating a space where clients can relax, refresh and leave feeling confident," the release stated. "Their commitment to exceptional service and enhancing each guest's natural beauty has made them a welcome addition to the local business community."

Photos provided

The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed Hideaway Salon and Spa as a new chamber member.

In addition to celebrating their chamber membership, Hideaway Salon and Spa was selected as the 2026 recipient of the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce Give Back Program.

The Give Back Program was created to support and encourage the growth of new businesses in the community by providing a complimentary year of Chamber membership, valuable business resources, networking opportunities and increased visibility.

"The program helps local entrepreneurs establish strong roots, build meaningful connections and become active contributors to the South Haven area business community," the release stated.

As this year's Give Back Program recipient, Hideaway Salon and Spa will receive access to the full range of chamber membership benefits, along with recognition through chamber events, marketing opportunities and community engagement initiatives throughout the year.

"The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce is excited to celebrate Hideaway Salon and Spa and welcomes them as a valued Chamber member," the release stated. "The chamber looks forward to supporting their continued growth and success while recognizing the positive impact they are making within the local business community."

Hideaway Salon and Spa was selected as the 2026 recipient of the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce Give Back Program.

SWMI housing market sets mark ahead of peak season

By TONY WITTKOWSKI
Paxton Media Group

Southwest Michigan's housing market sales experienced an uptick in May but a drop compared to last year, which Realtors say will hopefully bring a good peak selling season this summer.

According to a report from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors, the number of houses sold in May fell by 3 percent to 252 from 261 in May of 2025. Year-to-date, the number of houses sold decreased by 11 percent.

"While the sales improved for May, they were down from May 2025. Homebuyers found the average selling price to be 6 percent higher and the median selling price 1 percent lower than in May 2025," said Luke Jeffries, association executive of Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors.

The inventory of houses for sale increased 1 percent over what was available a year ago. At the end of May, there was a six-month supply of houses. Jeffries said this level still needs to be higher for buyers searching for listings for sale across Allegan, Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.

In May of 2026, the average selling price rose 6 percent to $406,458 from $385,028 in May of 2025. Year-to-date, the average selling price increased 7 percent ($399,030 vs. $373,899). The May average selling price was the highest in the year-over-year comparison looking back to 2006.

The median selling price in May of 2026 dipped 1 percent to $311,000 from $313,225 in May of 2025. Year-to-date, the median selling price decreased 6 percent to $285,000 from $301,710 in May of 2025.

The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in May was 6.48, up from 6.37 in April for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

The increase in the number of house sales in May raised the total dollar volume slightly higher than it was a year ago ($102,427,625 vs. $101,858,629). The year-to-date total dollar volume dropped 13 percent.

The number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions was 2 percent. The previous low percentage was 1 percent in May of 2024, while the highest percentage in May was 34 percent in 2009.

Across the country

Existing-home sales increased by 3.2 percent month-over-month and year-over-year, according to the National Association of Realtors existing-home sales report.

The report provides the real estate ecosystem – including agents, homebuyers and sellers – with data on the level of home sales, price and inventory.

Month-over-month sales increased in the Northeast, Midwest and South, and were unchanged in the West. Year-over-year sales rose in the Midwest, South and West, and fell in the Northeast.

Total existing-home sales increased 3.2 percent in total sales month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.17 million in May. Year-over-year, sales increased 3.2 percent.

"More Americans are on the move, with home sales rising to the highest level since December. This is great news for the housing market and the economy," said NAR Chief Economist Dr. Lawrence Yun. "Improving affordability is helping drive this momentum. Even with mortgage rates ticking up compared to earlier in the year, they remain lower than a year ago and are essentially at the long-term historical average. Income gains are also outpacing home price growth by a small margin in most parts of the country."

The new record-high May home price reflects solid fundamentals for homeowners and ongoing supply constraints, Yun said.

"Only 1 percent of all home sales involved a foreclosure or an underwater situation in which the sale price could not cover the outstanding mortgage balance. This shows that homeowners are on solid financial footing," Yun said. "Increased home sales mean more economic activity – lawn care, furniture purchases, moving services, mortgage originations and other related business activities all get a boost."

The median existing-home price for all housing types in May was $429,300, up 1.3 percent from one year ago – the 35th consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales increased 6.4 percent month-over-month to an annual rate of 1 million.

First-time buyers were responsible for 35 percent of sales in May, up from 33 percent in April and up from 30 percent in May of 2025.

The total housing inventory registered at the end of May was 1.55 million units, up 3.3 percent from April and up 0.6 percent from May of 2025. At the end of May, there was a 4.5-month supply of unsold inventory, unchanged from last month and down slightly from 4.6 months one year ago.

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pets of the Week, Pepper & Mittens!

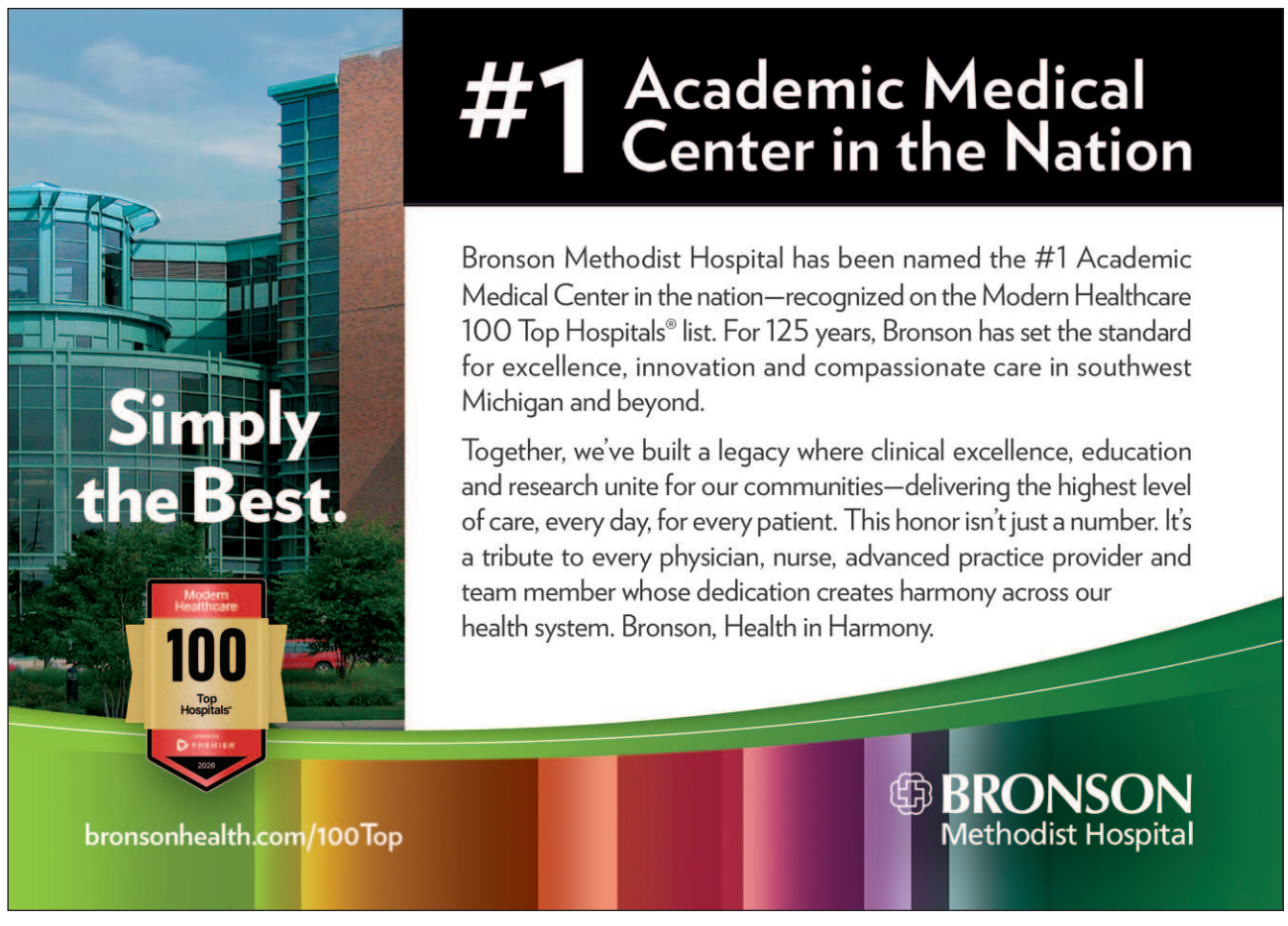
Seeking loyal subjects for their majesties: Queens Pepper & Mittens. Pepper and Mittens are a beautiful pair of sisters with striking eyes, unique coats, and all the confidence you'd expect from royalty. These independent ladies know exactly what they like and have recently decided that people might actually be worthy of their company. If you're looking for two feline queens with impeccable style and unforgettable personalities, Pepper and Mittens are accepting applications for devoted human attendants. To submit an Adoption Survey, visit al-van.org/adopt.

Empty the Shelters
There's never been a better time to adopt! Through July 26, thanks to BISSELL Pet Foundation and Cathy Bissell, adoption fees are reduced: Dogs & Kittens: $65 • Adult Cats: $30

Pawlates
Join us this Sunday, July 19th for Pawlates at the Michigan Maritime Museum! Move, stretch, and unwind during a beginner-friendly Pilates class while adoptable cats roam, play, and steal the spotlight.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
Non-Clumping Clay Cat Litter, Poop Bags, Printer Paper, Duct Tape

Subscribe to the South Haven Tribune
To start home delivery of the South Haven Tribune, 269-429-1396. To report missed deliveries, wet or damaged papers, call the circulation department before 3:30 p.m. at 269-429-1396.


Simply the Best.
Modern Healthcare
100
Top Hospitals
PREMIER
2026
#1 Academic Medical Center in the Nation
Bronson Methodist Hospital has been named the #1 Academic Medical Center in the nation—recognized on the Modern Healthcare 100 Top Hospitals® list. For 125 years, Bronson has set the standard for excellence, innovation and compassionate care in southwest Michigan and beyond.
Together, we've built a legacy where clinical excellence, education and research unite for our communities—delivering the highest level of care, every day, for every patient. This honor isn't just a number. It's a tribute to every physician, nurse, advanced practice provider and team member whose dedication creates harmony across our health system. Bronson, Health in Harmony.
bronsonhealth.com/100Top
BRONSON
Methodist Hospital

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9 to 10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

South Haven Farmers Market: Open from 8 a.m. to 2pm on Saturdays, from May to October; and on Wednesdays from June through August.

South Haven Center for the Arts: National juried exhibition with the Arts and Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan on display from June 20 to Aug. 1.

South Haven Memorial Library: Kids story time and yoga class at 10 a.m. on Mondays.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Fish tales storytime from 11 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "It's Guessing Time" Storywalk by Mila Milan available through July 31.

July

19 – First Congregational UCC: Soul Food Experience with dinner and concert featuring Serita's Black Rose Duo at 5 p.m. Cost $20, reservations required by July 12.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Tie dye from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Get colorful and a little messy. Create your own tie dye masterpiece to wear all summer long.

21-22 – South Haven Memorial Library: learn how to play American mahjongg from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Dinosaur trivia at 6 p.m. Think you know your dinos? Put your prehistoric knowledge to the test in a fun evening of dinosaur trivia and friendly competition.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. and enjoy salt dough fossils.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy art at 11 a.m. Head outside for some seriously fun, seriously messy art-making. This special outdoor session at the pavilion is all about creativity without limits.

24 – South Haven Performance Series: featuring Vox GR at 7 p.m. at Peace Lutheran Church.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Movie – The Good Dinosaur at 2 p.m.

26 – South Haven Dragon Boat Association: Dragon Boat social paddle from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Check-in begins at 2:30 p.m. Cost $10, first visit is free.

27 – South Haven Memorial Library: Kids Bingo at 5 p.m. Grab your dabbers and get ready for a roaring good time. Join us for a few rounds of Bingo with prizes.

28 – South Haven Memorial Library: Preschool storytime at 11 a.m. Books, rhymes and wiggles – dino style. Preschool storytime features age-appropriate stories and activities for our littlest explorers.

28 – Historical Association of South Haven: Old-fashioned ice cream social from 2 to 4 p.m. featuring ice cream from DeGrandchamp's Farm Store and the Casco Band. The event will take place on the lawn at Hartman School, 355 Hubbard St.

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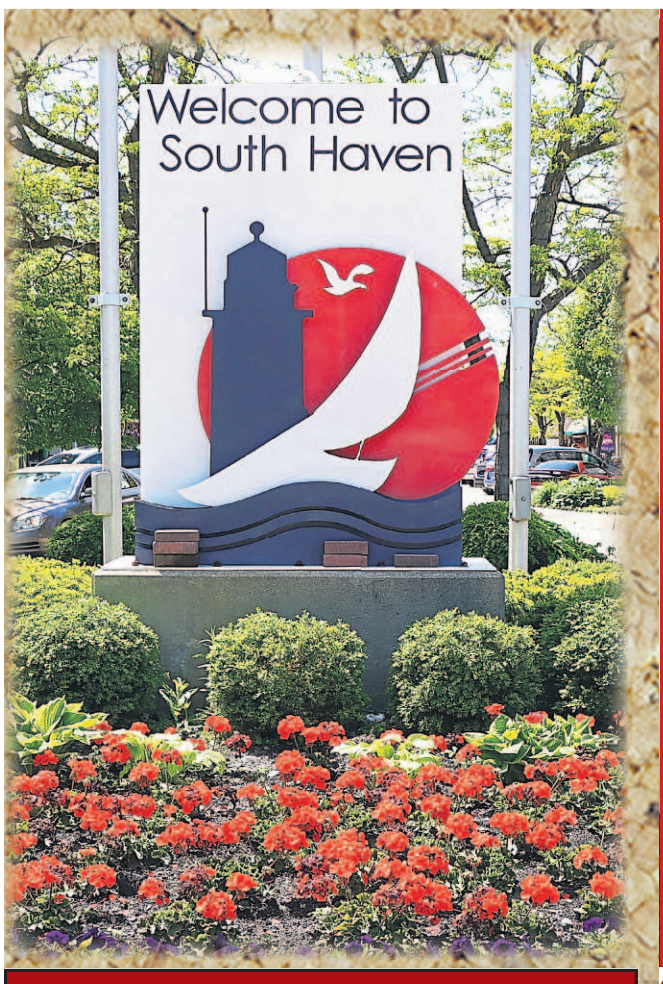

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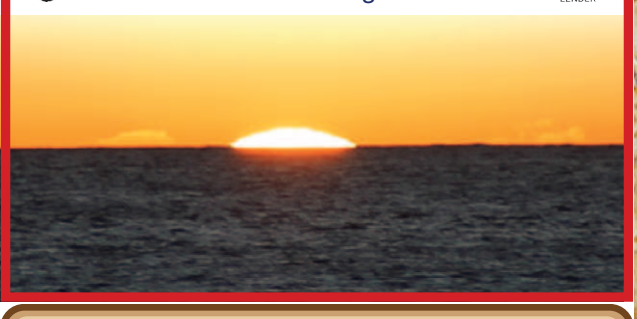

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FOCUS

“Tanfluencers” widely share popular videos of extreme tanning methods and media monitor weather reports for maximum ultraviolet exposure to the sun, as well as other methods, for a dark tan.

Katrina Brown / Dreamstime / TNS

Gen Z calls the new social media trend ‘tanmaxxing.’ Experts call it ‘harmful’ and ‘destructive’

By SEAN KROFSSIK
Hartford Courant (TNS)

HARTFORD, Conn. — A recent trend on TikTok, Instagram and other social media platforms touting “tanmaxxing” have health experts concerned about the skin of young people, in particular Generation Z.

“Tanfluencers” widely share popular videos of extreme tanning methods and media monitor weather reports for maximum ultraviolet exposure to the sun, as well as other methods, for a dark tan.

The American Academy of Dermatology conducted its annual Practice Safe Sun Survey in May, which showed that 64 percent of Gen Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, encountered sunscreen misinformation online. Also, 36 percent of Gen Z named social media influencers as their primary source for skincare advice.

“The survey underscores a perception gap between what Americans understand to be safe sun practices and the reality of good habits. This leads to a difference between awareness and action in protecting our skin from harmful ultraviolet radiation,” the American Academy of Dermatology said in a news release.

The national survey, which included 1,132 U.S. adults, was conducted by Versta Research from Jan. 19 to Feb. 2, 2026. It revealed that “misleading information online is a key driver of sun safety decision making, with more than 16 million adults reporting reducing or stopping sunscreen use because of online claims.”

Dr. Dean George, medical director of cutaneous oncology at the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute, said he is troubled by this latest social media trend.

“They’re doing what the tanning crowd did back from the ’70s with the tanning booths, excessive tanning with baby oil and iodine,” George said. “They are reviving that trend for 2026, which is insane. … You don’t want to get your health advice from TikTok. It’s very bad.”

George said young people “with not a fully developed prefrontal cortex” are being targeted.

“They are going to listen to whatever these influencers have to say in a lot of cases, which is dangerous. I saw that they were even trying to promote melanotan and afamelanotide, which can cause melanoma,” he said. You’re really only supposed to take that if you have protoporphyria or another indication where the benefit outweighs the risk, and that is definitely not in teenagers.”

“They’re doing what the tanning crowd did back from the ’70s with the tanning booths, excessive tanning with baby oil and iodine. They are reviving that trend for 2026, which is insane. … You don’t want to get your health advice from TikTok. It’s very bad.”

DR. DEAN GEORGE
Medical director of cutaneous oncology, Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, skin cancer is “the most common cancer in the United States, and exposure to ultraviolet rays is a major cause.”

George said one tanning bed exposure increases the risks of developing melanoma and multiple trips a week are “compounding the risk.”

“When you have a tan, it’s basically your skin cells screaming that they’ve been damaged,” George said. “When you get UV radiation, you can actually look at the number of solar mutations that a person has over time. This damage accumulates. When you get UV exposure from the sun or from a UV lamp from a tanning bed, you’re causing damage. The cells are basically screaming ‘Hey, our DNA is getting cooked here,’ and that stimulates the pigment cell.

“Melanocytes are attached in the basal layer and for every 20 or 30 skin cells, and they have these little tentacles that stick out between the skin cells, and they deliver these little granules of pigments to the skin cells. When you get a burn or you’re stimulating that process, you can actually look under the microscope and you can see the little pigment over the nucleus like a little umbrella,” he added. “DNA damage that accumulates over a lifetime. It stays with us.”

He said teenagers and young people in their early 20s don’t understand the risk and are just “living in the day.”

“You see that with smoking and vaping – the damage comes later in life. While you’re young and bulletproof, it seems like a great idea and you want to get likes and attention,” George said.

George said this trend is dangerous and is calling for TikTok to have mechanisms in place to “take this nonsense off of the platform.”

Dr. Richard Antaya, director of pediatric dermatology at Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital and a professor of dermatology, pediatrics and nursing at Yale School of Medicine, described the “tanmaxxing” trend as “harmful” and “destructive.”

“We’ve been trying to steer people away from this for a long time, and unfortunately, here’s another one of these trends,” Antaya said. “I’m hoping it goes away like other trends on TikTok, which are damaging.”

Antaya, who has been a doctor in pediatric dermatology for 28 years, said over the decades he has seen improvement in skin care with fewer of his patients sitting in the sun or using tanning beds.

“I have seen more teenagers using spray tans, which are completely safe if they want color,” Antaya said. “But it doesn’t seem that (tanning) was as in vogue to be dark tan like it used to be.”

He added that trends like tanmaxxing can be damaging to the improvements that have been made over the years. He equated tanmaxxing to other vices like smoking.

“Smoking used to be really cool and now it’s not as cool and people realize that it’s definitely harmful. It’s not pretty to die from lung cancer or COPD. The same thing with melanoma. It’s a pretty ugly death,” Antaya said.

“I tell my young teen girls look at your mom and grandma, if you want to tan, you’re going to look like them but a lot sooner,” he added. “Sometimes that’s a good deterrent. But that’s what photoaging is – it’s damage to your skin from the UV. If you protect your skin, your skin looks beautiful for a lot longer.”

Antaya said he’s terrified of the damage trends on social media can cause with the spread of misinformation.

“It’s a lot easier to spread these trends than it is to spread logic and truth. We have seen all sorts of trends come and go and, unfortunately, people suffer the consequences,” Antaya said. “I warn all of my patients about the concerns I have for social media and kids are very influential. There are platforms they are getting their information from, but we have to keep trying to get the word out.”

Dr. Brett Sloan, a dermatologist at UConn Health, said these trends of maximum UV exposure and using tanning booths are glamorizing tanning and downplay long-term health effects.

“Kids have always gone out and gotten tan. We know more information, now its effects and UV exposure, but there is a lot of bad information out there now being circulated,” Sloan said. “There’s no doubt UV rays cause skin cancer, and some skin cancer can be deadly.”

Sloan said exposure to the sun like what goes on in tanmaxxing “ages your skin.” He added that skin also loses its collagen and the skin begins to sag.

“It won’t affect you in your 20s or might not even, maybe in your 30s, but eventually you’re going to regret it. All the tanning you’ve done as a teenager or a 20-year-old,” Sloan said.

Sloan said he sees thousands of patients each year that have skin cancer or pre-skin cancer.

“They tell me, ‘Oh, I haven’t gone out in the sun in 10 years.’ A lot of this damage was done 20, 30 years ago. There’s just this lag period from when you’re getting exposed to this amount of sun to when the adverse effects show up on your skin,” Sloan said. “It’s always a good idea to protect your skin. What you do in your teens and 20s and 30s will catch up to you in your 40s, 50s and 60s. It’s inevitable.”

Sloan said it’s not uncommon for him to treat patients for skin cancer as a teenager or in their early 20s. Sloan said he has treated people in that age bracket that have developed melanoma and died from skin cancer. He said that skin cancer isn’t that uncommon for people under 30.

“It just takes knowing or seeing some of those (cases) to realize the importance of not tanmaxxing,” Sloan said.

Sloan said self-tanner or spray tanner is the safest way to get the tan look because it doesn’t affect the DNA or integrity of the skin. He said there is no such thing as a “safe tan” otherwise.

“If you’re going outside, you should do the opposite of tanmaxxing and avoid the peak UV period between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and protect your skin with an SPF of at least 30,” Sloan said.

FOCUS

Why Gen Z is falling in love with film photography

By ROTEM ROZENTAL
University of Southern California
(The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Film photography is experiencing a resurrection, summoned by unlikely conjurers: Gen Z.

It wasn't too long ago that analog photography – which uses photographic film and chemical processing – was declaredall but dead, relegated to the province of niche hobbyists and professional artists.

Digital cameras had taken over nearly all areas of photographic production. Film industry titans like Polaroidand Kodak had shrunk dramatically from their heyday, becoming shells of their former selves. Darkrooms, where students learned how to manually develop and print film, shutteredat high schools and college campuses across the country, replaced by digital labs. For most people, the spirit of analog photography was mainly channeled through Instagram filters.

But within the past five years, younger people have been increasingly drawn to the old way of doing photography.

In 2025, 35 percent of the 42 million active film camera users worldwide were reported to be between the ages of 18 and 30. The year prior, online searches for analog photography saw a 41 percent rise.

Disposable camera sales have been steadily increasing since 2023. The photography journal PetaPixel went a step further and announced 2024 as "film's best year in decades," as major brands have introduced new cameras in response to renewed demand and revived classic models. More than 30 percent of respondents to a 2024 Ilford Photo survey on film photography were in the 25-34 age group.

As I've witnessed more and more of my undergraduate art and design students embrace analog photography, I'm not seeing this as a trend rooted in a nostalgic yearning for the past. Instead, I'm seeing it as young people rejecting algorithms, breaking free from the alienation of social media and reacting to childhoods spent on Zoom and TikTok – a deliberate move to redefine the future of art, social connection and engagement with the world.

Pining for a 'third place'

In my work as a historian of photography and lecturer at the University of Southern California, I'll often ask my students about how they take photos – whether they're using digital cameras their smartphones or analog devices.

This year, for the first time, some of my students discussed images they'd printed and the physical photography albums they'd put together of their friends and family. They talked about how they'd also been sending postcards, writing letters and tacking photographs to their bedroom walls.

I couldn't help but think about how so much of the language tied to early social media seemed to refashion physical gestures for a virtual world – "posting" on a "wall," "poking," "tagging" and "bookmarking," not to mention "friending."

This was a rhetorical move by social media companies, likely designed to help people feel as though they were in a familiar terrain of social connection. Yet the underlying business model of these platforms depended more on maximizing engagement and advertising revenue than on nurturing authentic relationships.

Everyone knows what happened next: The more connected young people became online, the more isolated and detached they started to feel. The COVID-19 lockdown pushed social life online even further, and researchers are only now starting to see how the combination of increased screen time and isolation negatively affected adolescents' mental health. By 2023, 51 percent of American teenagers reported they spend at least four hours a day on social media.

I see the attraction of analog photography as a response to life lived through screens, a pathway toward community engagement and the desire for what sociologists call "a third place."

Coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his 1989 book "The Great Good Place," third places are meant as a space separate from home and work. They offer a reprieve for the in-between, generating the conditions needed for creative cross-pollination. They might include a local cafe, a neighborhood writing group, a weekly Magic: The Gathering game or a college fraternity – any space that allows for social interaction and personal growth.

These spaces also combat loneliness. They get people out of their heads and into a community. Oldenburg also referred to them as "havens of sociability," places or gatherings where people can arrive alone to join others, and the atmosphere is "democratic and festive."

Analog communities IRL

In April 2026, the inaugural AnalogCon took place in Los Angeles. Organized by the Los Angeles Center of Photography, where I serve as executive director and chief curator, it was a festival for all things analog photography. It didn't just serve as a third place for photography enthusiasts; it also showed how analog photography – as a practice, ritual and community – is flourishing.

Vendors, industry leaders, artists and teachers participated in the two-day event, which included exhibitions, panels, demonstrations and guided photography tours around Little Tokyo. The excitement and thirst for similar events was palpable.

Photography now joins a broader trend of a generational preoccupation with physical cultural objects and media. Although music streaming represents 82 percent of revenues generated in the music industry, vinyl records sales have been rising for over a decade, crossing the US$1 billion threshold in the U.S. in 2025.

Nearly 60 percent of Gen Z are now purchasing records. VHS tapes and VCR players are also making a strange comeback, with stores like Be Kind Video and Videotheque in California offering VHS, DVDs and Blu-ray rentals.

But beyond that, record stores and video rental shops have become third places in their own right. There's a big difference between selecting a film to stream from your bed and getting out of the house, going to a store and talking about movies with a clerk and fellow film enthusiasts.

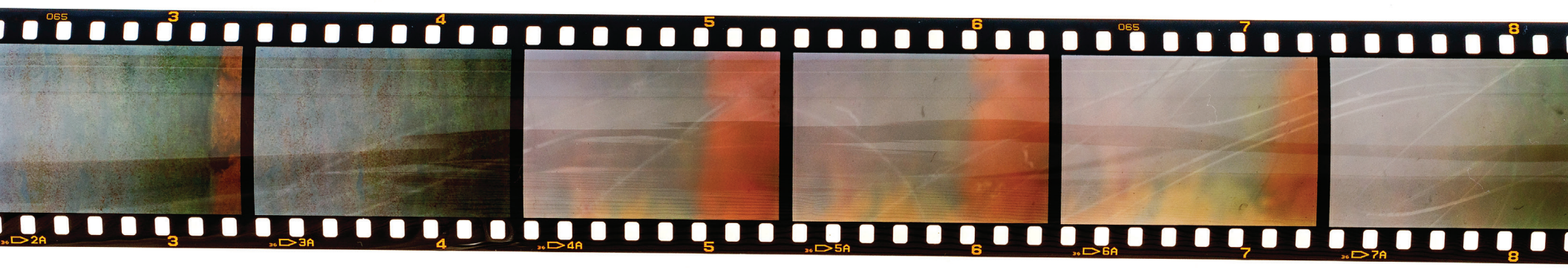
Think about the sound a tape cassette makes when you open and close it, or the vibrant graphics on the covers of DVDs or VHS tapes. Think about rewinding or making a mixtape for your recent crush. These are objects of belonging that signal specific cultural moments, rituals and aesthetics, and many young people today are starting to experience them for the first time.

Now, think about gently inserting a roll of film into a camera. Think about choosing an angle carefully when snapping a photo, because the number of frames is limited and you want to make them count. Think about the thrill of discovery when the pictures finally emerge as objects on paper.

To me, these are more than fleeting trends. They signal a push against a digital culture that is designed to cultivate envy and reward outrage, insults and humiliation.

Instead, armed with rolls of film, more and more Gen Zers appear to be opting out of their algorithmic feeds in favor of experiencing life in ways that feel more deliberate, personal and tangible.

Rotem Rozental is a lecturer in critical studies at the Roski School of Art and Design, University of Southern California. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.



FOCUS

Jessica Gonzalez passes by shelves of candles at Happy Organics' studio in downtown Los Angeles on June 18.

Photos by Christina House / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Don't eat that!

Her beeswax fruit and veggie candles look so real, you'll want to take a bite

By LISA BOONE
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

A variety of fruit and veggie candles sit on a tray at Happy Organics' studio in downtown Los Angeles on June 18.

A worker holds a cactus candle at Happy Organics' studio in downtown Los Angeles on June 18.

A worker pours wax into a mold for a cactus candle at Happy Organics' studio in downtown Los Angeles on June 18.

Mixed berry candles are packaged at Happy Organics' studio in downtown Los Angeles on June 18.

LOS ANGELES — Jessica Gonzalez hustles behind her booth at the recent Renegade Craft Fair, frantically ringing up sales, answering questions and packaging her beeswax candles.

It's hot on the grounds of the Los Angeles State Historic Park in April, but 35-year-old Gonzalez and her fiancé, Jordan Colindres, keep their cool as a crowd gathers to admire her Happy Organics candle collection, a homage to her family's produce company in the Central Valley that looks like real fruits and vegetables.

"I love doing in-person events because it's so fun to see people's reactions," she said a few months later. "It makes me feel good to see other people finding joy in my candles. They often say, 'Oh, that's really funny.' And it is funny to have a cherry candle on top of your birthday cake."

Judging by the smiles and charmed looks on shoppers' faces, her produce-inspired candles are less about illuminating rooms and more about sharing the joy she sought when she first started the company in 2018.

But then, it's hard not to smile at the playfully elegant Bosc pears, puckered mandarins and green-and-purple asparagus taper candles which range in price from $12 to $40. Some are molded into corn on the cob, celery and rhubarb shapes. Others are made to look like mushrooms, figs, tomatoes and snap peas. The most popular are the small birthday candles shaped like raspberries, cherries and blackberries, packed in molded-pulp baskets just like you'd find at the grocery store or farmers market.

Gonzalez didn't start out as a designer. The youngest of nine children, she was born in 1991 in Salinas and later moved to Merced, where she grew up on a 10-acre farm. She studied computer science at Mills College, then worked in tech consulting in the Bay Area and eventually became the CTO of an ag-tech company. When her mother, Angela, became ill in 2016, she returned to Merced to be with her family.

When her mom died suddenly soon after she moved home, Gonzalez left the tech industry. "I wasn't connected with what I was doing," she said. "I wanted to find something more meaningful; something I loved. I didn't want my ego to keep me stuck in what I studied in college. I decided to let myself try new hobbies and passions and look for joy again."

After her mother's death, she began working with her father, Salvador, and her uncles at the family's apiary, where they managed more than 30 hives. (Her grandfather was also a beekeeper in Michoacán, Mexico.) Soon, she began selling their raw honey at local farmers markets. In a heartbreaking turn, her father was diagnosed with cancer a year later, so she started making cannabis-infused honey, balms and chocolates to help ease his pain.

When she saw that the beeswax candles, which last significantly longer than paraffin candles, were selling faster than the honey, she decided to focus on making candles from the leftovers from her uncles' hives.

She was only 25, but it was a turning point. "It was one of those moments where I felt like I needed to change my path," she said. "I needed to change everything in my life."

When her father died in 2018, she inherited his bees and started Happy Organics, although she hadn't planned on starting a business. After experiencing so much loss, making candles became a kind of therapy. "It felt great to work with my hands again, something I thought I'd never have time for," she said.

Her oldest sister, Sonia Gonzalez, said Gonzalez reminds her a lot of their father, who reinvented himself many times over the years.

"He grew up as a village boy in the rural mountains of Michoacán, Mexico, and went on to work in restaurants, cut down Christmas trees and pick strawberries and broccoli in the fields of Salinas," she wrote in an email. "From there, he started selling produce door-to-door, then at flea markets and eventually built his own produce distribution business from the ground up. As the youngest of nine kids from a working-class family, Jessica's always been incredibly resourceful, responsible, and amazing at reinventing herself."

Like a lot of millennials, Gonzalez taught herself how to make candles by watching YouTube videos. She started with hand-dipped tapers, working in the garage on the farm that helped her feel safe and connected to her parents. "It was a really nice environment to try something new and creative," she said.

Inspired by her family's produce, she cast real corn, strawberries and cherries in plaster, then made a silicone mold to create copies. Even when using the same mold, color can vary from batch to batch, and how it cools also affects the result. "That's just how handmade things are," she said. "There's always some variation."

When she moved to Los Angeles in 2023 to be with Colindres, her business took off. "L.A. is a great place to grow," she said. "There's so much opportunity here. When I go to a farmers market, I never know who I'll meet."

She sold her candles in person at craft shows, the Hollywood Farmers' Market and most recently, during a residency at the P.F. Candle Co. showroom in Echo Park.

"I have a lot of respect for her as a fellow candle maker (making molds is not easy), but getting to know her story more and how her choice of foods and wax is reflective of her family's history gave it so much meaning," P.F. Candle Co. founder and creative director Kristen Pumphrey said in an email. "It's been a tough couple of years for L.A. businesses, so we gotta stick together – there's this wonderful sense of community hosting a local brand that's so passionate about their work."

As her business has expanded, her products are now available at Terrain, Joan's on Third and the MoMA Design Store in addition to her website. She has also had to source beeswax from other vendors across the country to keep up with demand.

Kimberly Curtis, owner of Hide & Seek Vintage in Studio City, said Gonzalez's strawberry and cherry birthday candles "flew off the shelves last year" during the holidays. "Our customers love them," she added.

Still, Gonzalez stays connected to her Central Valley roots. Everything she and her small team make in downtown Los Angeles is handmade and "takes time," she said, describing the steps involved in crafting quality candles. Right now, her favorite is the Nopal Cactus candle, which she made using a clipping from an employee's yard. While others help her with production, wholesale management and packaging, she focuses on sales, content and all-new product development.

When asked if she has advice for others who want to start their own business, Gonzalez admits she sometimes feels overwhelmed.

"The biggest thing that has gotten me through the toughest spots is my why or my reason for starting," she said. "I think that has to be really strong. That's what brought me a lot of comfort when I felt like quitting: going back to the beginning and remembering why I started this."

For Gonzalez, her reason is always close to her heart. "I wanted to feel connected to my parents in some way," she said. "This was a good representation of my upbringing."

This story originally appeared in Los Angeles Times.

HEALTH

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Recognizing the signs of testicular cancer

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: My cousin, who's in his late 20s, was recently diagnosed with testicular cancer. I didn't know this is something younger guys need to worry about. Can you fill me in?

ANSWER: Testicular cancer isn't common – about 9,800 men are diagnosed each year and 1 in 250 may be diagnosed in their lifetime – but it most commonly affects men between the ages of 15 and 45. It's not something to worry about; however, it is something to be aware of. In addition to your age, you're at a higher risk of testicular cancer if you:

■ Have an undescended testicle.

■ Have a family history of testicular cancer.

■ Are white.

It's not clear what causes testicular cancer, which typically affects just one testicle. But it starts when something changes the DNA of the testicular cells, causing them to grow and multiply quickly, forming a tumor. Nearly all testicular cancers begin in the germ cells, which make sperm.

Signs of testicular cancer include:

■ A lump, bump or swelling in either testicle.

■ A feeling of heaviness in the scrotum, which is the loose bag of skin beneath the penis and holds the testicles.

■ A dull ache in the lower belly or groin.

■ Sudden swelling in the scrotum.

■ Pain or discomfort in the scrotum or a testicle.

■ Enlargement or tenderness of breast tissue.

■ Back pain.

Testicular cancer is highly treatable, even if it spreads to other parts of the body. Treatments include surgery and chemotherapy.

There isn't a screening test for testicular cancer, although healthcare professionals may recommend a self-exam, just as women do breast self-exams. Your clinician can show you how to do it.

However, there's no research to show that self-exams lower the risk of dying from testicular cancer, since it's highly curable even at late stages. But a self-exam will help you become more familiar with the feel of your testicles and alert you to any changes.

If you're experiencing pain or swelling or have felt a lump or bump in your testicle that hasn't gone away in two weeks, it's time to consult with your healthcare professional.

At your appointment, they will examine your scrotum, feel the testicles and may order an ultrasound. These images can help with diagnosis. If cancer is suspected, a blood test can detect the proteins made by cancer cells. Having them in your blood doesn't mean you have cancer, but higher levels provide your healthcare team with clues to what is going on in your body.

From there, you may need surgery to remove the testicle and have it tested for cancer. If the cancer hasn't spread beyond the testicle, this may be the only treatment you'll need. If there's concern that it's spread to some lymph nodes, those nodes also will be removed and tested.

Depending on the findings, your oncology team will put together a treatment plan, which may include chemotherapy, radiation or immunotherapy. Because these treatments may affect fertility, you'll want to discuss options with your team for preserving sperm.

Following treatment, your care team typically will follow your progress for five years.

Remember, testicular cancer is highly curable. But early detection can make a difference. That's why it's important to schedule regular physical exams. At those exams, bring up any concerns you might have about symptoms and be prepared to provide details about them to your clinician. These may include:

■ When did they begin?

■ Are they continuous or occasional?

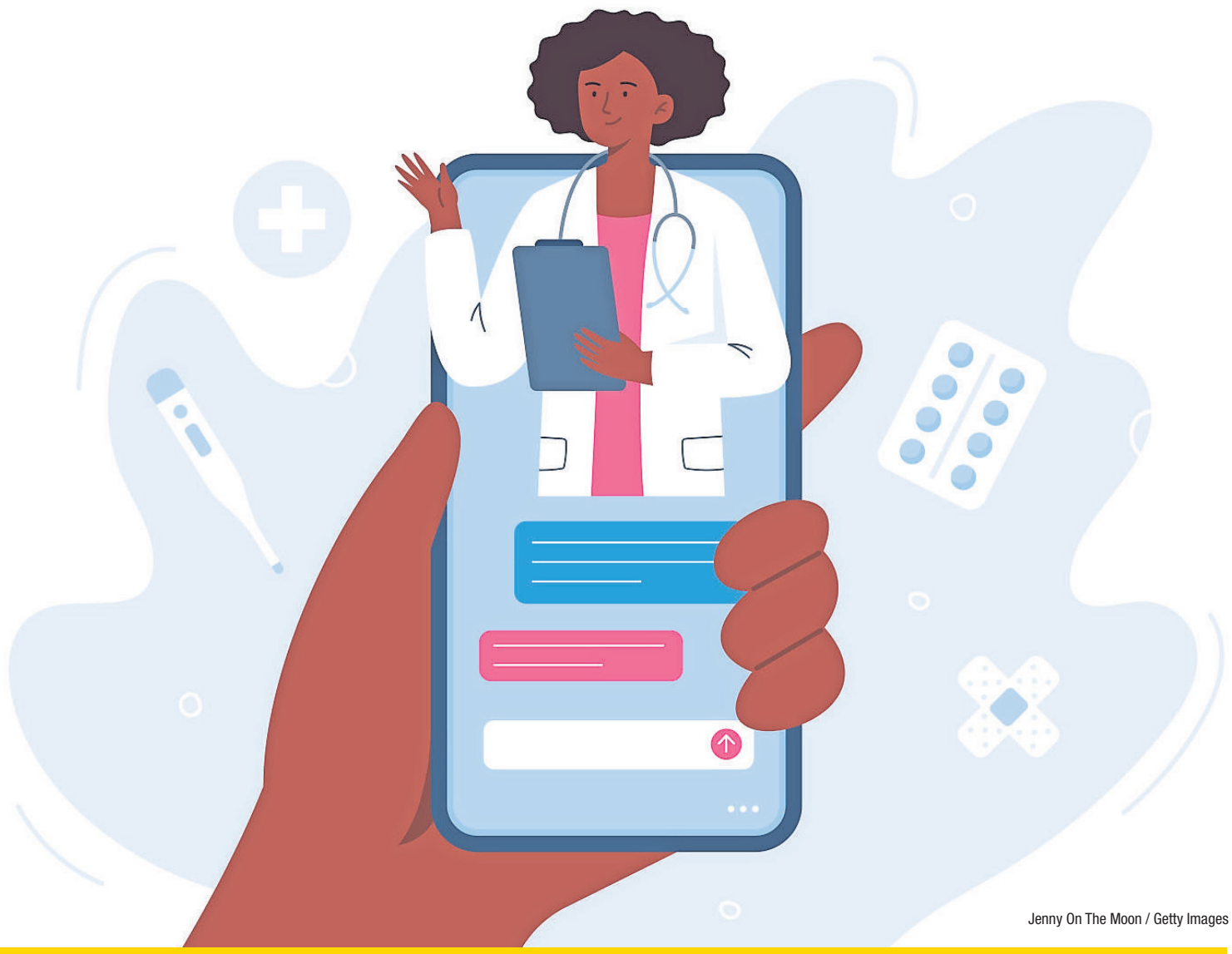
■ How severe are they?

■ Does anything improve them or make them worse?

If at any time you have concerns about symptoms, don't ignore them. Make an appointment to see your primary care healthcare clinician. Being proactive about your health is one of the most important things you can do for your overall well-being.

– Mohammed Solaiman, M.D., Family Medicine/Primary Care, Mayo Clinic Health System, Mankato, Minnesota

TikTok is reinventing healthcare



Jenny On The Moon / Getty Images

– should you trust it?

By CINDY KRISCHER GOODMAN
South Florida Sun Sentinel (TNS)

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Monica Carter, a nurse practitioner specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, appears on a TikTok screen, saying she is seeing so much "trich" in her clinic.

Trichomonas is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a parasite, not a virus, she tells her 15,000 followers.

"It is supercurable, and it's rampant and common, and honestly, it's not tested with routine testing. I am seeing it every day," she exclaims on her post, which elicited more than 36,500 likes.

For decades, medical wisdom was dispensed exclusively within exam rooms and clinics. But social media has moved healthcare education from traditional offices into the palms of millions through mobile platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Carter says she jumped onto TikTok after filming a quick video about a "patient situation" in her Washington, D.C., clinic and watched it instantly explode. "Everyone was like, 'We love this. Can you do this more?'" she said. She since has posted on women's health issues and said followers frequently comment that their own doctors had never explained conditions like fibroid endometriosis or premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) so clearly.

"I love to give valid, reliable, evidence-based information on social media," Carter told more than 500 health professionals at the recent 2026 Health Foundation of South Florida Black Health Summit in Pembroke Pines. "I do it more as health education, not medical advice, so that others can empower themselves and advocate for themselves when they're seen in their doctor's office."

Carter noted that topics like menopause, perimenopause, and IUDs are currently driving massive engagement on TikTok. Rather than bringing in myths, patients are arriving at appointments highly informed, requesting specific treatments like Hormone Replacement Therapy with a nuanced understanding of the risks.

"Our young patients don't Google anything; they go into TikTok and type in 'birth control,'" Carter said. "It's happening, and if you can't beat them, join them. I'm just out there trying to make sure they get great information."

Roughly 41 percent of all major health and wellness influencers on social media are credentialed healthcare professionals (including doctors, nurses, physical therapists, and dermatologists), according to a new survey from the Pew Research Center. They command millions of followers across high-traffic platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.

Photos by Joe Cavaretta / South Florida Sun Sentinel / TNS

Monica Carter speaks as media health influencer Dr. Michael Forde looks on during the Black Health Summit on June 16 in Pembroke Pines, Fla.

Dr. Michelle A. Kirwan speaks during the Black Health Summit on June 16 in Pembroke Pines, Fla.

Check your health facts

Tips for finding and vetting reliable health information online:

■ Look for verified, regulated credentials in the specific field an expert is discussing. A chiropractor is not a substitute for a pediatrician.

■ Be highly skeptical of unregulated terms like health coach.

■ Evaluate a claim to see what the creator stands to gain from it. (Are they selling you a supplement or master class?)

■ Be highly suspicious of content that offers simple, absolute solutions to complex medical conditions.

■ Watch out for cherry-picking: Unreliable accounts will often pull a single, poorly designed study out of context to back up a wild claim.

■ Social media platforms feed you what you engage with. If you want a healthier timeline, start actively following content from reliable sources: major research hospitals, government health agencies, and credentialed professionals.

Sources: Dr. Matthew Facciani, American Medical Association, HHS.gov

Finding the falsehoods

Public health expert Dr. Michael Forde, with 300,000 TikTok followers, said he uses his social platform to educate and bridge the gap between history and health outcomes. He said his goal is to be trusted by his followers for health information and remain objective and entirely "fact-checkable" to counteract the noise of unverified online medical advice.

Yet medical falsehoods on social media do influence health decisions.

Dr. Matthew Facciani, a public health misinformation researcher at Yale University, noted that a cancer treatment decision is about as high-consequence as a health decision gets, yet it is unusually prone to a confusing and dangerous online information environment. Patients tend to respond to who makes them feel seen during a difficult time in their lives, he said. This matters because cancer falsehoods online are directly linked to higher rates of death, studies have found.

"Platforms reward engagement, and content built on fear or hope tends to outperform careful, hedged accuracy," Facciani said.

Across YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter, low-quality content gets more views, more likes, and more shares than accurate content, he said.

"There's a difference between being credentialed and being trusted," he said. "Trust is built through relationship and feeling heard, and expert content sometimes moves to correction before doing that relational work."

What would actually help, "is (medical experts) showing up consistently rather than only in response to a viral claim," Facciani said.

Moving from online to in-person

While Forde actively embraces his role as a digital health advocate, he draws a firm line when patients substitute algorithms and feeds for actual clinical care.

According to a June 2026 ehealth survey, 49 percent of insured Americans have used AI tools for medical advice, and 63 percent of these have acted on the guidance they received without consulting a doctor.

"I don't think that doctors should ever be replaced," Forde said. "At the end of the day, they're the people who are seeing you and doing the research."

In doctors' offices, this digital influx of health information requires a new style of patient interaction, say South Florida physicians.

Dr. Michelle Kirwan, a Miami pediatrician, educates online through a podcast called Black Health. "It's an opportunity to extend my reach beyond the exam room," she said.

However, she uses the concept of "loud listening" in the exam room – being fully open and receptive to the information patients bring from their social feeds.

"A misleading messenger can make harm feel believable," Kirwan said.

Kirwan said she had a teenage patient struggling with an eating disorder who finally began recovering only after spending a month at a summer camp without her phone. The teen later revealed to Kirwan that she had been following a glamorous influencer who actively encouraged extreme weight loss.

"I realized I have to really be listening to that social conversation that is happening so that I can get in front of it," Kirwan said. "I have to show my patients proof that this is why something is incorrect or correct."

"I learned my lesson that day."

Rethinking aging: Why 'healthspan' matters as much as lifespan

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

Mayo Clinic physicians are working hard to change how clinicians and patients think about aging. A new publication in Mayo Clinic Proceedings outlines a new framework for "healthspan" – the years of life spent in good health, with preserved function, cognition and independence.

The paper, coauthored by Christina Chen, M.D., a Mayo Clinic physician in internal medicine and geriatrics, and Sara Bonnes, M.D., argues that living longer is not necessarily the same as living well and explores how a greater focus on healthspan could reshape medical care.

Here, Dr. Chen discusses the research and its implications for patients and clinicians.

What is 'healthspan,' and how is it different from lifespan or longevity?

Patients often say, 'I want to live to be 100,' and that is a meaningful goal. But living longer may not be the same as living well.

Healthspan is about how well you live during those years – your ability to function independently, think clearly, and maintain a good quality of life. It shifts the focus from simply adding years to making sure those years are meaningful.

Why does this distinction matter now?

Doctors have been very successful at extending lifespan, but less effective at preserving the quality of those added years.

What we are seeing in clinical practice is that many people are living longer with chronic disease, reduced mobility, cognitive impairment and increasing dependence. That gap between years lived and years lived well is growing, and it is something clinicians see every day.

What are clinicians missing in today's approach to care?

When we equate living longer with living better, care can become too focused on disease alone. We may not pay enough attention to one's functional abilities, cognitive health, the ability to remain independent at home – the things patients value most.

Traditional measures like lab values or survival rates do not tell us whether someone can manage their daily activities, stay socially connected or continue living safely and independently. That is a critical gap in how we define success in medicine.

How can healthspan be measured in clinical practice?

Healthspan becomes actionable when we start measuring additional domains like physical function, cognitive health and independence in a consistent way.

We already have practical tools to do this – things like gait speed, grip strength, balance assessments, cognitive screening and patient-reported outcomes. These are validated measures that can be incorporated into routine care and give us a much clearer picture of how patients are actually doing.

When we also prioritize measuring these domains alongside thoughtful preventive care, we can track them over time and use them to guide clinical decisions in a way that aligns with what patients care about most.

How could a focus on healthspan change patient care?

A healthspan-focused approach shifts the goal of care toward helping patients stay independent, mobile and clear-minded for as long as possible.

It also changes how we talk to patients. Instead of focusing only on treating disease, we can frame care around how to preserve function, cognition and overall well-being so they are able to live well with dignity. That shift helps patients better understand the purpose behind recommendations and can improve engagement in their care.

What should patients and clinicians be thinking about differently?

We can start by changing the conversation, it begins with the words we use. Instead of asking only how to extend life, we can ask how to help patients live well, what are their goals and how can we help them reach those goals.

That includes preserving the ability to perform everyday activities, maintain social connections and continue living independently. Small changes in how we talk about care can help patients see that the goal is not just longevity, but living with quality, dignity and purpose.

Dreamstime / TNS

A new publication in Mayo Clinic Proceedings outlines a new framework for "healthspan" – the years of life spent in good health, with preserved function, cognition and independence.

What are the next steps for this research?

Our goal is to make healthspan something we can measure and track in everyday clinical practice. If we can do that, we can better align care with outcomes that truly impact patients' lives.

The next steps include developing standardized metrics, integrating them across specialties and designing care models that prioritize function, independence and long-term quality of

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Aprescindere / Dreamstime / TNS

Summer may be a prime season for a sport, such as baseball or running, but athletes of all types also may be on a traveling team, heading to a sports camp or just honing their skills with off-season practices.

Watch out for summer sports injuries in youth and adult athletes

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: Our teenagers are both student athletes and active in their sports year-round. I'm concerned about injuries that could sideline them. What should we watch for?

ANSWER: As the school year ends, summer sports heat up for students and adults alike. Summer may be a prime season for a sport, such as baseball or running, but athletes of all types also may be on a traveling team, heading to a sports camp or just honing their skills with off-season practices.

No matter an athlete's age, they need to be aware of and condition their body to prevent injuries that can put their sport on hold. Here are several to watch for:

■ Heat-related injuries. When it's hot and humid, proper hydration is essential. Signs of overheating include not sweating, feeling extremely thirsty, becoming dizzy, experiencing a headache or vision changes. These symptoms call for immediate attention. All athletes should hydrate before, during and after their activity. Water is best, as are drinks that replenish electrolytes lost through perspiration.

■ **Sprains and strains.** These common injuries can affect ankles, knees, hips and shoulders. However, they aren't traumatic injuries like fractures or a complete ligament tear, and they tend not to require long-term recovery.

Tendons attach muscles to bones, while ligaments attach bones to bones. A sprain is the stretching or partial tearing of the fibers in a ligament. A muscle or tendon strain may result from overuse, leading to inflammation. Both are treated by modifying activity, rest, icing, and taking over-the-counter pain and anti-inflammation medications. Physical therapy may be needed to rebuild strength and range of motion.

■ **Fractures.** A fracture is a broken bone. Fractures often occur during falls, such as when skateboarding, or from collisions with other players or objects. Fractures can be cracks or complete breaks that may or may not require surgery. Treatment and recovery depend on the severity of the injury. Athletes should plan to be in recovery for at least 6 weeks.

■ **Overuse injuries.** With the emphasis on early sports specialization, young athletes often spend more time practicing or competing, increasing the risk of injury. This injury risk is especially true for young athletes who are still skeletally immature. That means they still have open growth plates in their bones, making them susceptible to injury, particularly from repetitive motion.

Athletes understand that repetitive motion is the way to improve. However, if a young athlete is pitching every day or repeatedly practicing a volleyball serve, they can overuse a single part of their body. This can lead to inflammation or even damage those areas. One indication of overuse is pain after a game or practice that takes longer to resolve, increasing recovery time.

Safeguards such as pitch counts, which limit the number of pitches a player throws during a game, and built-in rest days are important to preventing overuse injuries.

Another way to avoid overuse injuries – and burnout – is cross-training. For instance, a hockey player may add swimming to their routine, a runner may add weight training, or a soccer player may shoot hoops with friends. This allows an athlete to use different muscles and movements to build strength, flexibility and coordination, while also giving them a mental break.

■ Concussion. A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that affects brain function. Effects are often short-term and can include headaches and trouble with concentration, memory, balance, mood and sleep. Concussions can happen in any sport, not just those in which players intentionally run into each other, such as football or hockey.

If a player experiences dizziness, headache or nausea after an incident during a game or practice, they shouldn't shrug it off – they should step out of the game and tell a coach or parent. Today, most coaches are trained in concussion and return-to-play protocols developed for most sports. Athletes, parents and coaches should take concussions seriously to prevent further injury or long-term symptoms.

■ **Injuries in older athletes.** Older athletes returning to a sport or trying a new one are susceptible to the same injuries as young athletes. However, osteoarthritis, or the wearing down of the cushioning cartilage in joints, increases with age. This can lead to pain, swelling and a decrease in range of mobility. Once again, cross-training is key, no matter your age.

All athletes can reduce the risk of injury by getting plenty of sleep, developing healthy eating habits, hydrating and warming up properly before any sports activity.

Michael Stuart, M.D., Orthopedics & Orthopedic Surgery, Mayo Clinic Health System, Owatonna, Minnesota

Take a deep breath and put down the needle: Inhalable insulin found safe for children

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

An insulin inhaler proved safe for treating children as young as 4 years old, improving satisfaction and reducing weight gain compared with those taking injected insulin, researchers from Johns Hopkins Hospital told The Baltimore Sun.

"Studies have shown that inhaled insulin works just as well as injectable insulin for mealtime glycemic health," said Dr. Risa Wolf, Director of Johns Hopkins Pediatric Diabetes Center. "This is a good alternative for not having to take an injection with every meal, especially for people who may be needle phobic."

Inhalable insulin has been available for adult diabetes patients for years, said Wolf, who is also an associate professor of pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine's Division of Endocrinology. The trial, published in Diabetes Care, did not show the inhaled insulin worked better, but that it was safe for younger patients.

She said the higher satisfaction rates for patients and parents may result in better outcomes because of social pressures.

"Adolescents can sometimes miss mealtime insulin because it's hard to take a shot in front of other people," Wolf said.

The trial enrolled 230 young patients between 4 and 17 years old who had type 1 and type 2 diabetes. They still had to take their daily injections, but half of the participants used an inhaler instead of a mealtime shot. The study ran for 26 weeks, and none of the patients reported difficulty breathing – a rare side effect for adults using inhaled insulin.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Baby sunburn prevention tips

By DEEPTI GUPTA, MD, FAAD, FAAP and MATTHEW MAHONEY, DO
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Sunny days invite outdoor family fun. When heading out with your little ones, keep in mind that babies need extra protection from sunburn. With a few simple precautions, you can help keep their skin healthy now and in the future.

Babies are more at risk of sunburn because their skin is thinner and more delicate than adult skin. They can burn more quickly, sometimes after just a short time outside. Babies with darker skin tones can develop sunburn, too. Additionally, babies are not able tell you when they are too hot or starting to burn, so they rely on adults to move them out of the sun and provide protection.

Sunburns are uncomfortable for anyone, but especially for babies. A severe sunburn in a baby is a medical emergency and needs care right away. The cells in babies' skin are especially sensitive to damage from sunlight. We also know that avoiding sunburns early in life can help prevent skin cancer, including melanoma, and signs of aging like wrinkles later in life.

The best way to protect babies from sunburn is to keep them out of direct sunlight and in the shade as much as possible. Babies younger than 6 months should be kept out of direct and indirect sunlight entirely because of the risk of heat stroke. Use shade-covered strollers and sunshades with UV protection or seek shade under trees or a beach umbrella.

Another way to help is to dress babies in lightweight long sleeve clothing, long pants and wide brimmed hats to protect the skin. It's best to avoid having a baby outside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest. For babies 6 months and older, regularly apply sunscreen to uncovered areas like the hands and face.

William Casey / Dreamstime / TNS

The best way to protect babies from sunburn is to keep them out of direct sunlight and in the shade as much as possible.

When choosing a sunscreen for your baby, look for products labeled "broad spectrum." That means it will block the two main types of the sun's rays, UVA and UVB. Look for sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. For babies, mineral-based sunscreens are best. These work by using minerals that sit on top of the skin and block the harmful UV rays. Mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide are perfect for sensitive baby skin, since they are unlikely to cause rashes or irritation. Spray-on sunscreens can contain propellant chemicals that are not recommended for babies.

For the best protection, sunscreen should be applied 15 to 30 minutes before going outside and be reapplied every 90 minutes to 2 hours, particularly if a baby goes into the water. Be sure to follow the instructions on the bottle.

Overall, any type of sunscreen is better than none.

Deepti Gupta, MD, FAAD, FAAP is a pediatric dermatologist practicing at Seattle Children's Hospital. Matthew Mahoney, DO, is a pediatrician and dermatology resident at the University of Minnesota.

FINANCE

sorbetto / Getty Images

When managing your money, take a chatbot's 'confidence' with a grain of salt

By PAWAN JAIN
University of Michigan (The Conversation)

Consider the following scenario. Suzy is 63, recently retired, and trying to decide when to start receiving Social Security and how to manage her retirement savings to minimize the tax hit.

She opens an AI chatbot, types in the details and gets a calm, well-organized and confident answer: Claim now, convert this much, here is the reasoning.

The chatbot sounds authoritative and even shows its work. So Suzy follows its guidance and never calls a financial planner. Maybe the advice was fine. But maybe it quietly ignored the fact that Suzy's spouse is younger and in poor health, which can flip the Social Security math. It also may have overlooked that the retirement savings plan conversion it suggested would push Suzy into paying higher Medicare premiums two years later.

Suzy won't find out for a long time, if ever, whether this guidance was right for her. And the AI will never call back to say it was unsure.

Suzy isn't an exception. AI chatbots have entered everyday life with remarkable speed: A 2025 Pew Research Center survey found that 34 percent of U.S. adults and 58 percent of those under 30 have used ChatGPT, roughly double the share two years earlier.

A growing number are asking AI about money, and some are getting burned. According to a 2025 survey of 2,000 U.S. adults by Pearl.com, a professional services platform, 19 percent said they lost more than $100 by following financial advice from an AI chatbot. Among Gen Z investors, that figure rose to 27 percent.

These aren't hypothetical risks. People are already paying for answers about their money that are confident – and wrong.

As a finance professor who has been closely watching the spread of AI into personal finance, this is the part of the AI story that worries me most. And it's not the part you usually hear about.

We argue about AI the wrong way

There are two seemingly opposite complaints about AI. One is that people trust it too much, treating a chatbot like an oracle, a tendency researchers call algorithm appreciation. The other is that people don't trust it enough and dismiss its useful tools, a tendency known as algorithm aversion.

I argue these are actually two sides of the same coin, and what decides which side you see is whether you can tell when the AI is wrong.

When an AI fails in an obvious way, you notice and lose confidence. So you're more likely to seek a professional or another human you trust sooner than you otherwise would. That is the safe failure.

The dangerous failure is the opposite. The answer is fluent, confident – and wrong. You have no way to catch it, so you keep managing the problem yourself long past when you should have asked for help.

The trouble is that with money, the second kind of failure is the common kind.

When you mistake fluency for accuracy

Three things make financial advice especially treacherous for AI.

First, fluency is not accuracy. People naturally read a confident and well-articulated answer as competent. But how polished an answer sounds tells you almost nothing about whether it fits your situation or the accuracy of the proposed solution. A chatbot can be word-perfect and still be wrong about your taxes, because your taxes depend on details it never asked about.

Second, AI is least reliable exactly where the stakes are highest. AI tools are good at routine and general topics: what a Roth IRA is, how compound interest works, the difference between a stock and a bond.

But financial life is full of rare, complicated, one-time decisions: exercising stock options, understanding the alternative minimum tax, making required, minimum 401(k) distributions, deciding on a Social Security strategy as a couple, drawing up a divorce settlement.

I made a similar argument three years ago about AI trading on Wall Street. Because market crashes are rare, there's little data for AI to learn from, so it can be most confident exactly where it is least informed.

That worry hasn't faded. Market watchers now caution that AI trading bots are creating fresh financial risks, and that same blind spot applies to your personal finances. Researchers call this uneven competence a "jagged frontier" – reliable with common cases but unreliable for unusual ones. And in finance, the unusual cases tend to be the expensive ones.

Third, you often can't check the work. Financial advice is what economists call a "credence good," like a mechanic's diagnosis or a doctor's recommendation. You often can't tell whether the advice was good, sometimes for years. A mistaken tax move may not surface until an audit. A bad 401(k) drawdown plan may not bite until the stock market slumps. Without quick feedback, the wrong-but-confident answer never gets corrected.

This is why the Pearl numbers above are probably an undercount, since they capture only losses people noticed.

The quiet failure is the one to watch

Notice that the real harm in Suzy's story isn't a single dramatic mistake. It's that a confident answer made Suzy feel no need to call a professional, so the call never happened.

The danger is not so much that you act on bad advice but that you never seek good advice. The smoother and more reassuring the tool, the easier it is to stay in do-it-yourself mode past the point when you need outside help.

Who's most at risk? In a study of a large robo-advising platform in India, co-author Vishaal Baulkaran and I found that its users skew young, are predominantly male and tend to be smaller retail investors and professionals. And new account sign-ups rise during periods of high market volatility.

In other words, the people leaning hardest on automated advice match that 27 percent figure among those Gen Zers who lost more than $100 while using a chatbot for financial advice. They reach for it just when markets turn turbulent and a wrong move is most costly.

There's also an incentive worth naming. In my new analysis, I argue that a tool that earns its revenue by holding your attention has a reason to sound confident and helpful: Confidence keeps you on the platform. The catch is that the user it retains that way is sometimes the one who should have been handed off to a human.

A system tuned to keep you engaged isn't the same as one tuned to protect your financial future, and the two can point in different directions. The disruption is already underway, as wealth managers face what Bloomberg has called a chatbot reckoning. A single, new AI tax tool recently sent wealth management stocks sliding as investors bet that automated advice will eat into the business.

How to be smart about using AI

These findings don't mean that people should avoid AI for money advice. Used well, these tools are a valuable and free financial educator.

This is also not to say that a financial adviser always has the right answers. As with finding any kind of specialist, it's important to do research first and make sure they meet the kind of criteria laid out by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Fee transparency is also crucial.

But if you do turn to AI, the skill is knowing where to draw the line.

Treat AI as a starting point, not a verdict. It's excellent for learning concepts, drafting questions and getting oriented before a meeting. It can teach people the vocabulary to have a smarter conversation with an expert.

But watch out for the signals that you have left its comfort zone and entered the territory where AI is weakest and a confident answer is least trustworthy. The red flags are large dollar amounts, tax consequences, anything irreversible and anything that turns on the specifics of your situation rather than a general rule.

Estate questions, the drawdown of retirement savings, strategies for claiming Social Security benefits, business structure and major one-time transactions all belong in this category. Those are the decisions that call for bringing in a human, such as a certified financial planner.

And remember, confidence isn't competence. When the answer about your money sounds most polished and most certain, that's not a reason to relax. On the hardest questions, that smooth confidence is exactly the signal that you should pick up the phone and talk to an expert.

Pawan Jain is an associate professor of finance at the University of Michigan. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

The 'mass affluent' are losing their allure for wealth managers navigating AI

By WILLIAM SHAW
Bloomberg News (TNS)

Wealth managers keen to stay relevant in the age of artificial intelligence may soon find that clients with a mere $1 million in liquid assets are no longer worth spending human hours on.

"The mass-affluent client now gets something close to private-banking quality from AI," said Debasish Patnaik, senior partner McKinsey & Co. That not only "strips the value from the adviser whose role was standardized advice," but it also means "the kind of person hired into wealth management changes fundamentally," he said in an interview.

The assessment implies that individuals with liquid assets between $100,000 and $1,000,000 – broadly defined as the mass affluent within the industry – could soon be handed over to AI. Instead, human wealth managers keen to show they can do better than AI need to focus their talents on the emotional needs of the truly rich, Patnaik's analysis implies.

The prediction comes as financial professionals everywhere struggle to interpret how AI will upend their careers. Signals from the industry and those advising it, meanwhile, aren't always consistent. And in wealth management, there are even signs that AI is creating hiring needs as firms seize on the promise of extra productivity to expand.

Citigroup Inc. plans to recruit hundreds of humans for its private banking and wealth management business as it deploys AI. That's as Chief Executive Officer Jane Fraser has made it an explicit goal for the bank to become a "global leader in wealth management."

Citi says it wants to add 400 wealth advisers across its US retail bank and another 100 staffers for its private bank. At the same time, the Wall Street bank is developing AI-backed software aimed at helping it produce near-instant reviews of portfolios at scale, down from the several hours such tasks take today.

Bankers will be able to "press a button" in order to instantly "draft an email from the chief investment officer and distill what it means for the client," Joe Bonanno, Citi's head of wealth intelligence, said in an interview.

Among products being rolled out by Citi are a conversational AI-powered avatar specifically intended to support rich clients on issues such as how to manage their child's college fund. The upshot overall is that AI will let Citi have more contact with its customers, and "engagement keeps clients happier and stickier," Bonanno said.

Patnaik says that when it comes to handling ultra-wealthy clients, it helps if a manager has the emotional nous to deal with tense situations such as deciding which family member gets to inherit what, or being there to hold their hand through a market rout.

The adviser who successfully "reads the room" and "manages family dynamics" will have the best chance of surviving the onslaught of AI, Patnaik said. They need to be willing to "sit with a client through a succession or a liquidity event, and help them think clearly. AI does not touch that, so firms will weight hiring heavily toward it."

Professionals in the industry, where senior managers handling ultra-high-net-worth clients can earn millions of dollars a year, are trying to figure out what exactly makes a human adviser irreplaceable by AI. That's as the list of AI products continues to grow. Anthropic PBC's Claude, OpenAI's ChatGPT and Alphabet Inc.'s Gemini already offer tools that allow users to model portfolios, optimize taxation and even explore possible philanthropic ventures.

Banks are also developing their own platforms. At UBS Group AG, the world's largest wealth manager, 90 percent of its advisory teams in the US are already using an internal AI platform to help make them more productive. UBS private bankers and wealth managers now get personalized insights on clients courtesy of the in-house AI tool the firm uses, according to a spokesperson.

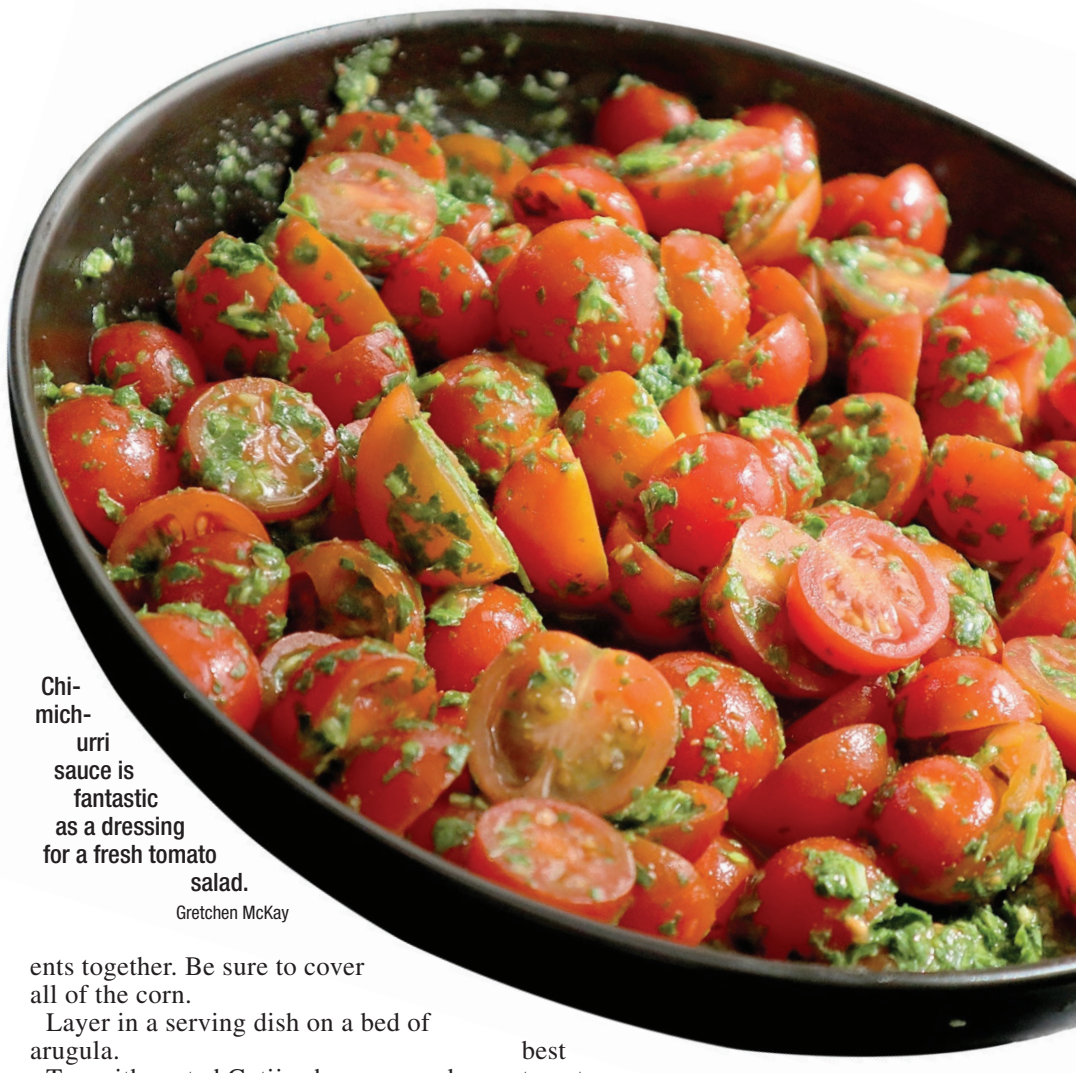
The Swiss bank is applying AI to improve areas like adviser productivity and operational efficiency, while at the same time prioritizing governance, transparency and trust, the spokesperson said.

In fact, AI's arrival now appears to be creating a need for new kinds of human expertise, such as AI governance. Patnaik says firms will likely increasingly need to rely on "specialists, behavioral data scientists, personalization architects, and human-in-the-loop oversight professionals."

These are "entirely new roles" that "did not exist in wealth management a few years ago," he said. "These hybrid profiles, combining domain expertise with technical fluency, are among the fastest growing and hardest to fill anywhere in financial services."

FOOD

4 FESTIVE SIDE DISHES FOR YOUR COOKOUT



Chimichurri sauce is fantastic as a dressing for a fresh tomato salad.
Gretchen McKay

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Last year, an estimated 70 percent of mid- to high-end grill owners cooked their holiday meals on charcoal or gas grills, according to the Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association. And we'll probably do it again this coming Independence Day.

National holidays, especially when they fall on a weekend, tend to bring folks together. And depending on your choice of protein, grilling is often the most inexpensive way to feed a crowd.

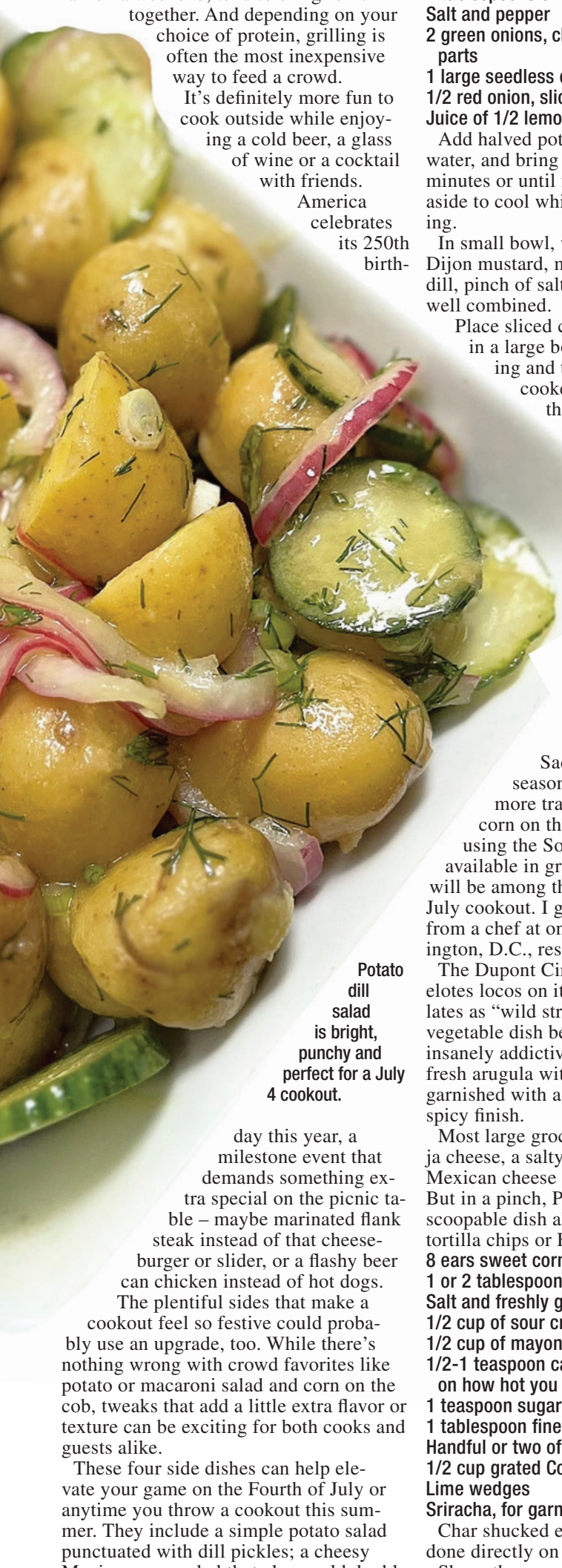
It's definitely more fun to cook outside while enjoying a cold beer, a glass of wine or a cocktail with friends.

America celebrates its 250th birthday this year, a milestone event that demands something extra special on the picnic table – maybe marinated flank steak instead of that cheeseburger or slider, or a flashy beer can chicken instead of hot dogs.

The plentiful sides that make a cookout feel so festive could probably use an upgrade, too. While there's nothing wrong with crowd favorites like potato or macaroni salad and corn on the cob, tweaks that add a little extra flavor or texture can be exciting for both cooks and guests alike.

These four side dishes can help elevate your game on the Fourth of July or anytime you throw a cookout this summer. They include a simple potato salad punctuated with dill pickles; a cheesy Mexican corn salad that also could double as a dip for tortilla chips; a bright and summery cherry tomato salad tossed in a herbaceous chimichurri sauce; and roasted cauliflower with a tangy tahini sauce.

All are super quick and super easy to prepare, feature fresh, seasonal market veggies, and best of all, are out of the ordinary in the best possible way.



Potato dill salad is bright, punchy and perfect for a July 4 cookout.

Dill Pickle Potato Salad
Serves 6

This tart potato salad comes together quickly, and because it doesn't contain any mayonnaise, it's safer on a picnic table so long as it's kept chilled. No need to buy bottled pickles – the dill pickle in its title refers to fresh cucumber that quickly turns crunchy once it's tossed in a briny dressing chock-full of fresh dill.

I used baby gold potatoes. No need to peel them; these small, buttery potatoes are blessed with a thin and tender skin. The salad will last an entire weekend in the fridge.

2 pounds baby gold potatoes, halved
2 tablespoons white vinegar
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons maple syrup
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
Salt and pepper
2 green onions, chopped, white and green parts
1 large seedless cucumber, sliced thin
1/2 red onion, sliced thin
Juice of 1/2 lemon (about 2 tablespoons)

Add halved potatoes to a pot of salted water, and bring to a boil. Boil for 10-15 minutes or until fork tender. Drain and set aside to cool while you make the dressing.

In small bowl, whisk together vinegar, Dijon mustard, maple syrup, olive oil, dill, pinch of salt and green onions until well combined.

Place sliced cucumbers and red onion in a large bowl. Add half the dressing and toss to combine. Add cooked and cooled potatoes, the rest of the dressing, another pinch or two of salt, a pinch of black pepper and lemon juice.

Toss until well combined and refrigerate until served.

– Adapted from betterfoodguru.com

Mexican Street Corn
Serves 4-6

Sadly, it's not quite corn season in Pittsburgh, but what's more traditional at a cookout than corn on the cob? It you settle for using the Southern-grown ears now available in grocery stores, this dish will be among the stars at your Fourth of July cookout. I got the recipe years ago from a chef at one of my favorite Washington, D.C., restaurants, Duke's Grocery.

The Dupont Circle spot lists the dish as elotes locos on its menu, which translates as "wild street corn." Never has a vegetable dish been so aptly named and insanely addictive. Served on a bed of fresh arugula with lime wedges, it comes garnished with a drizzle of Sriracha for a spicy finish.

Most large grocery stores have Cotija cheese, a salty, extremely crumbly Mexican cheese made from cow's milk. But in a pinch, Parmesan will work. This scoopable dish also works as a dip for tortilla chips or Fritos.

8 ears sweet corn charred on a grill
1 or 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup of sour cream
1/2 cup of mayonnaise
1/2-1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, depending on how hot you want it
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon finely chopped cilantro
Handful or two of arugula for serving
1/2 cup grated Cotija cheese
Lime wedges
Sriracha, for garnish

Char shucked ears of corn. This can be done directly on a grill or a gas stove.

Shave the corn off the cob carefully with a knife.

Saute kernels in a pan with butter, salt and pepper until tender, about 2 minutes.

Make crema: Put mayonnaise, sour cream, cayenne, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt and cilantro in a mixing bowl and mix until smooth. Mix hot corn and crema ingredients together. Be sure to cover all of the corn.

Layer in a serving dish on a bed of arugula.

Top with grated Cotija cheese, a wedge of lime and a drizzle of Sriracha.

– Duke's Grocery & Duke's Counter, Washington, D.C.

Spicy Chimichurri Tomato Salad
Serves 4-6

There's nothing more magical in summer than a locally grown tomato. And if they're sweet and juicy cherries, even better! Back in the day, my dog Harry used to eat them right off the vine because they're such an out-of-hand treat.

Here, the small red fruit is tossed in an uncooked herb sauce that's more traditionally served with grilled meats: Chimichurri. The result is a colorful and herbaceous summer salad that could be used as a topping for tacos the next day if there are any leftovers.

4 cups halved cherry tomatoes or 4 large tomatoes, quartered
1 large handful fresh parsley (about 1 cup)
1 large handful fresh cilantro (about 1 cup)
2 cloves garlic, smashed
5 or 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon salt
Crushed red pepper, to taste

Place tomatoes in a large bowl.

Add remaining ingredients to a food processor. Pulse until smooth.

Pour about half of the Chimichurri sauce over the tomatoes and toss to coat. If it doesn't seem like enough, add more to taste but remember, you don't want it to dominate the sweet taste of the tomatoes.

Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Elote salad is easier to eat than corn on the cob, and also can be made ahead of time.

Roasted Cauliflower with Tahini Dressing
Serves 6

Cauliflower is often thought of as a cool-weather dish, but it is possible to occasionally find it in early summer. Last week, for example, I lucked upon the most gorgeous head of purple cauliflower I'd ever seen at a farmers market in northern Virginia.

If it shows up at a picnic, cauliflower is usually a raw ingredient served with dip on a crudité platter. I was inspired to roast the florets until they caramelized, then tossed them in a tangy, lemony tahini dressing to be served as a salad.

I liked it so much I made it again with standard white grocery store cauliflower.

Cook's note: If you roast the veggie on a sheet of parchment paper, it makes for easy cleanup. Try your best to cut or break the florets into uniform, bite-size pieces so they cook evenly and are easy to eat. Don't take them out of the oven until the tips are golden brown – a telltale sign they have caramelized.

1 large head white or purple cauliflower
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
Sea salt
1/4 cup smooth tahini
3 tablespoons water
Juice of 1/2 lemon, or more to taste
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
1 small garlic clove, finely minced

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper for easy cleanup.

Remove outer leaves from cauliflower, then break or cut into bite-sized florets to ensure even cooking.

Toss florets with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a good sprinkle of salt. Spread evenly spaced in a single layer.

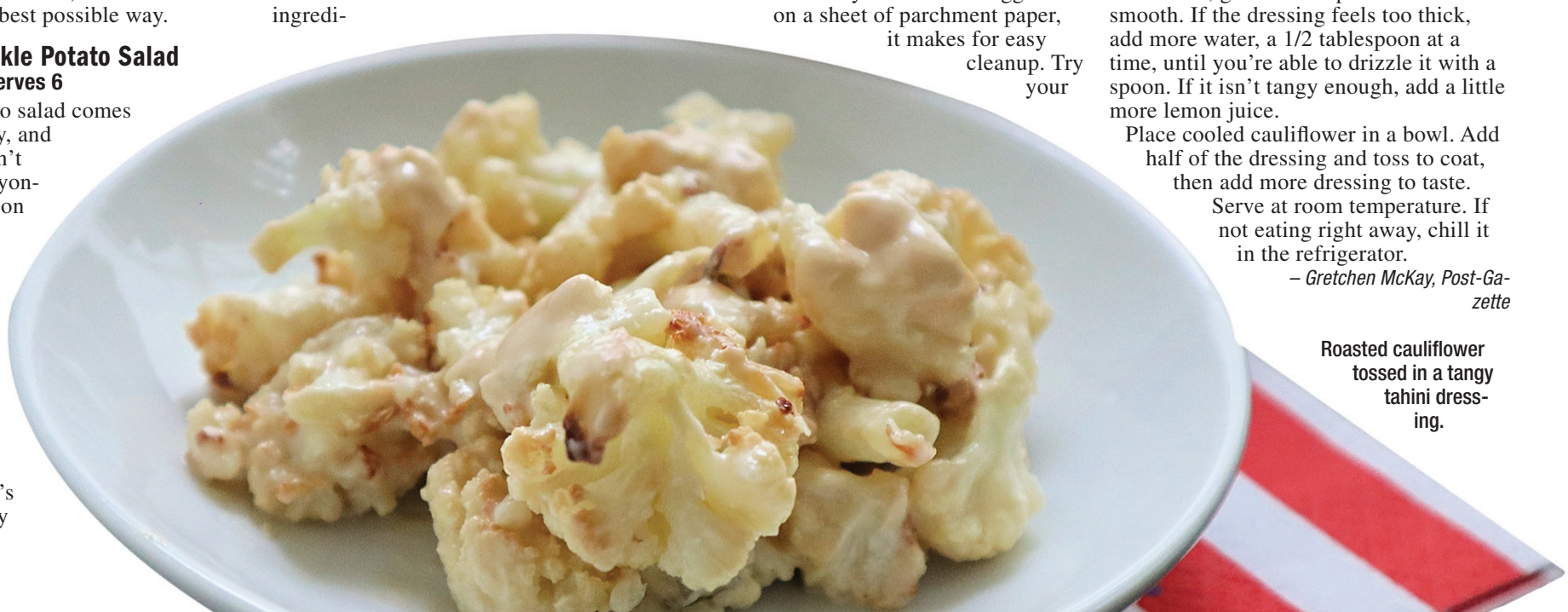
Roast for 20-30 minutes, flipping halfway through, until edges are golden and florets are tender. When done, set aside to cool while you prepare dressing.

In a small bowl, whisk together tahini, water, lemon juice, olive oil, maple syrup, sesame oil, garlic and a pinch of salt until smooth. If the dressing feels too thick, add more water, a 1/2 tablespoon at a time, until you're able to drizzle it with a spoon. If it isn't tangy enough, add a little more lemon juice.

Place cooled cauliflower in a bowl. Add half of the dressing and toss to coat, then add more dressing to taste.

Serve at room temperature. If not eating right away, chill it in the refrigerator.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette



Roasted cauliflower tossed in a tangy tahini dressing.

AI-generated Tilly Norwood was created with a wide variety of scenarios in mind: rom-coms, dramas and indies. This image is AI-generated.
Particle6 / TNS

AI character Tilly Norwood is set for feature-film debut

Hollywood debates what it means to be an actor

By JOSH ROTTENBERG
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — For most of Hollywood's history, the word "actor" has required little explanation. Actors search for emotional truth in imaginary lives. They collaborate with directors and scene partners, endure 4 a.m. call times and, if everything goes right, thank their agents while collecting awards.

Tilly Norwood has done none of those things. That's because Tilly exists only as code and pixels.

Last week's announcement that Tilly – the AI-generated character that debuted last year amid fierce backlash from actors and unions – would star in an upcoming feature called "Misaligned" sparked a debate not only about AI's impact on Hollywood jobs but about something even more basic: What, exactly, is Tilly? Some objected to referring to the digital character as "she" or "her." Others rejected the idea that Tilly could be described as an actor at all.

The debate quickly spilled into readers' comments on The Times' coverage of the project. One commenter urged journalists to "stop writing about this thing like it's a person." Another asked, "How is this not just an animated film?" A third objected: "She is NOT an AI Actor, she is an AI Software Program." But not everyone recoiled. "I'll buy a ticket," one reader wrote. "She's very pretty."

Taken together, the reactions exposed just how unsettled the language around AI has become. Nobody has ever confused Woody from "Toy Story" with Tom Hanks or Elsa from "Frozen" with Idina Menzel, or suggested the characters themselves deserved acting awards. The Tilly concept is testing whether those assumptions still hold. If audiences laugh and cry at what they see on screen, who deserves the credit – the AI, the filmmakers behind it or both? And where, exactly, does the performance come from?

Speaking by video call Thursday from the London headquarters of Particle6 – the AI entertainment startup that invented Tilly – Eline van der Velden, who got her start as an actor before moving into filmmaking and AI, says she understands why many actors reacted so strongly.

"I totally understand the fear," she says. "I had the same fear when AI first came out. I didn't invent the technology. I didn't wish it was here. But it is. My way of dealing with it is to get on board."

Set in a surreal digital world its creators call the "Tillyverse" and described as a coming-of-age dramedy, the planned feature follows Tilly, an AI entity with no lived experience of its own that gradually develops desires, ambitions and even shame as it becomes increasingly human.

Van der Velden compares Tilly to a character like Cinderella. Just as audiences naturally refer to the Disney princess as "she," she argues it feels natural to think of Tilly the same way. She doesn't consider the pronouns important.

"People can call her whatever they want," she says with a shrug. "I take no offense to them calling her an 'it.'"

The label she cares more about is actor. Van der Velden envisions Tilly not as a single fictional character but as a performer who could appear in anything from a costume drama to a monster movie to a music video.

"The reason I called her an actor was because I don't want to be limited to one character," she says. "I've just created my own little Barbie doll and I want to play around with her."

Van der Velden says creating a Tilly performance is a collaborative process that combines acting, AI prompting and traditional filmmaking. Van der Velden and other actors help develop the character's backstory, voice and emotional life and, in some cases, contribute performance and motion-capture work. The creative team then reviews and refines multiple AI-generated versions of a scene before deciding which expressions and line readings best serve the story.

"That's where the critical human eye comes in," Van der Velden says. "The choice-making is important. That's the creativity right there."

Even its creators don't always know what Tilly will do next. Van der Velden says that reviewing different AI-generated versions of a scene can sometimes feel like discovering an unexpectedly inspired take from a human actor. "I'm going to give you a blooper reel one day," she says, laughing. "Honestly, she does the wackiest s---."

Van der Velden disputes the idea that Tilly is meant to replace actors. "I'm not interested in Tilly taking a role that could be played by a real actor in a real film," she says. Rather, the project has actually created new jobs, including for actors.

"We've sextupled our workforce," she says of Particle6, which now has more than 30 employees. Van der Velden says the company is also collaborating with Hollywood directors and producers who have asked not to be identified publicly, fearing backlash. "We've created jobs for filmmakers, including actors who are amazing at developing character and backstory – how this person would think, how they would say a line," she says. "Those skills still come into play. That's the biggest misconception."

Critics, including the leadership of SAG-AFTRA, counter that the displacement is already at hand in subtler ways, with background roles and commercials increasingly filled by digital doubles rather than human performers. For the actors union, the objection runs deeper than any single role or AI-generated advertisement. It's about what counts as a performance at all.

"Let's be clear: Tilly Norwood is not a person," SAG-AFTRA President Sean Astin and National Executive Director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland co-wrote in an October message to members. "It's a synthetic construct generated by software." They argued that such systems are built on the work of countless professional performers without their permission, credit or compensation, and that audiences ultimately connect not with algorithms but with artists because "performance has always been a mirror of our shared humanity."

Actor Justine Bateman takes an even harder line. Best known for playing Mallory Keaton on "Family Ties," Bateman later became a filmmaker, earned a computer science degree from UCLA and founded CREDO 23, a film festival dedicated to showcasing and certifying movies made without AI.

To Bateman, no amount of convincing mimicry changes the fact that an AI figure has never actually experienced the emotions it's portraying.

"It should be absolutely nonnegotiable – if you have a character in your film that is a human, that must be played by a human actor," Bateman, a former SAG-AFTRA board member, told The Times last year.

Stephen Galloway, dean of Chapman University's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts and the former executive editor of the Hollywood Reporter, sees Tilly occupying an uncomfortable middle ground. He likens Tilly to Pixar's computer-animated characters – another technological leap that initially met resistance before becoming accepted as a legitimate form of screen performance.

"Yes, it's a kind of performance," Galloway says. "Tilly isn't an actor and yet it is a performance. It's a strange paradox."

Still, he sees a crucial distinction.

"We go into a movie with the desire to believe," he says. "We go in willing to see the same person in different settings – Brad Pitt or any movie star – because they allow us to pretend they're somebody else and identify with them. When it's an entirely computerized creation, you're coming in with the odds completely stacked against that. You're never going to believe Tilly Norwood is a real person in a real situation that we can identify with and care about. The reality remains too fake to accept."

Galloway says he got a glimpse of that resistance this spring when Chapman University hosted a symposium examining AI's impact on entertainment. After promotional materials announced that Tilly would be appearing, he says, the school was inundated with emails from people who mistakenly assumed the AI character was being presented as the equivalent of a celebrity master class.

"We'd had master classes with the Rock and Ariana Grande," he recalls. "Suddenly there was this wildfire: 'How dare you do a master class with Tilly Norwood?' People were more upset about Tilly than about all sorts of things going on in Washington."

Whatever happens to Tilly, it is unlikely to be the last AI-generated character audiences encounter. AI-generated influencers, virtual personalities and digital performers are already proliferating online, while entertainment companies continue to experiment with AI-created characters.

Bateman worries audiences may eventually stop caring whether a performance comes from a human being or AI. "If you've only fed them junk food and then you put some beautiful Michelin-star food in front of them, it'll seem alien to them," she says.

To Bateman, the difference isn't merely aesthetic; it's human.

"AI has gotten better at all the quirky human behavior – the little head tilts and hesitations and body language," she says. "But when you hear somebody singing live who has that gift, who has that instrument in their throat, it's remarkable. It hits the human soul."

Matt Damon as Odysseus and Zendaya as Athena in "The Odyssey."
Photos from Melinda Sue Gordon / Universal Pictures / TNS

MOVIE REVIEW

Nolan's *'The Odyssey'* brings scope, scale and beauty to timeless tale

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

'The Odyssey'

★★★★

MPA rating: R (for violence and some language)

Running time: 2:52

How to watch: In theaters

Christopher Nolan has made films about bombs ("Oppenheimer") and bravery ("Dunkirk"); about heroes ("Batman Begins"), villains ("The Dark Knight") and the uncomfortable space in between ("The Dark Knight Rises"). He's made movies about family ("Interstellar"), time ("Tenet") and dreams ("Inception"); memory ("Memento"), magic ("The Prestige") and mystery ("Insomnia"). His first film is about a writer ("Following"), while his 13th – "The Odyssey" – is about mythmaking. It all seems to have been leading to this.

Here, Nolan manages to fit his every obsession, every thematic preoccupation, and every bit of jaw-dropping visual and sonic spectacle that he can conjure into every supersized frame of film. To do so, he borrows one of the oldest tales of all time, a cornerstone of human storytelling: Homer's epic poem, "The Odyssey," which dates back to the 8th century BCE.

"Oppenheimer" is a film about guilt as much as it is about a bomb, and "The Odyssey" is a film about trauma (and guilt, too) as much as it is about a journey home. That notorious Trojan horse? It's as bad as the bomb to Nolan. A gift filled with enemy soldiers, it's a cunning and cruel feat of strategy and a nasty trick, one that will forever haunt its architect, Odysseus (Matt Damon), his name linked with this war crime in every tale sung at every feast.

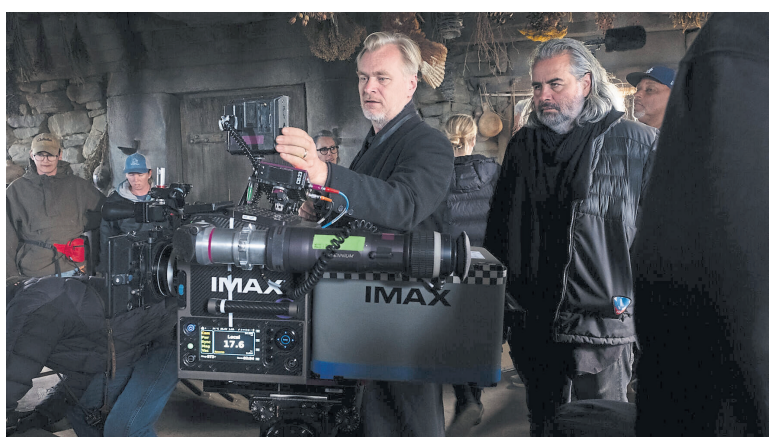
His story is of returning home, but it's not a return to himself. After 10 years fighting in the Trojan War, Odysseus and his men spend 10 years trying to get back to the island of Ithaca. They fight off cyclops and witches, evade sirens and Poseidon's wrath, and Odysseus ultimately finds a kind of peace on a beach with the nymph Calypso (Charlize Theron), eating lotus to forget his past, but nagged by visions of the goddess Athena (Zendaya).

All the while, Odysseus' queen Penelope (Anne Hathaway), son Telemachus (Tom Holland) and faithful servant Eumaeus (John Leguizamo) anxiously await his return, fending off the rabid suitors partying in their castle, jockeying for a chance to be king. The family yearns to be reunited but are afraid to face each other, and themselves, after all the years lost to war, along with so many lives.

What makes Nolan's vision of "The Odyssey" so entrancing is the sheer scope, scale and beauty of it. Like a general, he marshals his tremendous resources, talent and an army of artists in service of conveying his message to a rapt audience. It's the first film to be shot entirely in IMAX (by his longtime collaborator, cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema), in locations spanning the globe from Morocco to Iceland, with the best cinematic craftspeople lending their skill to making the myth real. It's the immediacy and tactility that makes this adaptation arresting; the sweat, size and sound of it.

Percussed and concussed by Ludwig Göransson's pounding score, battle sequences crafted by editor Jennifer Lame build to a frenzy of unrelenting momentum and chaos that never allow us to drop into a satisfying rhythm, offering a disquieting sensation of cinematic violence – as it should be. The narrative structure nests flashbacks within recollections as Odysseus recounts his tale, to Calypso, then Penelope. From his fog of hazy memory, something like the truth emerges.

We assumed Odysseus was the hero. As it unfolds, he might not be. He confesses that they broke Zeus' law with the horse trick, ushering in centuries of darkness with this crime against humanity. As Odysseus laments in ancient Greece, on a giant silver screen, the "centuries of darkness omen" feels all too real, because "The Odyssey" isn't about any other time period but right now, of course.



Director Christopher Nolan, left, with cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema on the set of his film "The Odyssey."

The thrum of modernism reverberates throughout, in little anachronisms like Telemachus calling him "Dad," and the free use of contemporary vulgarities. Jon Bernthal delivers a performance as Menelaus that's executed with the swagger of a New York mobster. These are Nolan's little hints that "The Odyssey" isn't about anyone other than us, about the violence we continue to enact on each other in the name of what, exactly? Damon's everyman performance captures this universality beautifully. He can embody so many things – he's both a bro and a brute, a masculine paragon emotionally open enough to express Odysseus' grief and shame; a good soldier who had to make bad choices.

The most heart-stopping sequence is a brief stop in Hades, where fallen soldiers emerge from black sand and demand honor and accountability for their deaths, for their lives. The dead were mostly absent from Nolan's other war films, "Oppenheimer" and "Dunkirk," but here, they're inescapable. On his grandest scale yet, Nolan reckons with the dead, face to face, and asks us to do the same, like Odysseus. Putting all of that spectacle behind this simple but powerful message – it's nothing less than glorious.

What's the (very) big deal about seeing *'The Odyssey'* in 70 mm IMAX?

By CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE
Las Vegas Review-Journal (TNS)

LAS VEGAS — It's based on a 12,000-line poem thought to be more than 2,700 years old, and it will be, quite literally, the biggest movie of the summer.

Christopher Nolan filmed "The Odyssey," opening Friday, using technology that didn't exist until he pressed for its invention.

It's the first feature-length movie ever shot entirely with IMAX film cameras. The resulting 70 mm IMAX version is a massive reel of film, boasting frames about three times larger than regular 70mm film and around nine times larger than traditional 35mm film.

There are 25 theaters in America where you can see this version of "The Odyssey," with none of the incredibly vivid images cropped out, exactly the way Nolan intended.

The only one in Nevada is Brenden Theatres at the Palms.

$32,000 worth of humidifiers

Brenden executives learned in February that their Las Vegas location would be getting "The Odyssey" in the coveted format. But first, IMAX technicians had to certify the projection booth, which hadn't used its massive film projector since Nolan's "Interstellar" was released in 2014.

"They were good about it," Walter Eichinger, Brenden's vice president of operations, says during a tour of the booth. "They sent people to help us get prepared. So it wasn't, 'We're coming tomorrow. You guys better be ready.' They sent technicians, and they just brought us up to speed and got our film projector out of mothballs. They upgraded the sound. They upgraded the software."

Among the improvements: Brenden shelled out for two $16,000 humidifiers to keep the physical film loose and pliable. That sounds like an enormous amount of money until you consider that each 70 mm IMAX print of "The Odyssey" reportedly cost $80,000 to produce.

"We were all-in. We said, 'If we're going to do it, we're gonna do it the right way,' " Eichinger recalls. "We didn't cut any corners. We got exactly what they recommended."

Projectionists flown in

Obtaining the print and getting the equipment up and running was just the beginning.

Somebody has to actually operate the projector.

"We have a group chat that's got, right now, 90 guys maybe, and some of those are administrators and non-booth personnel," projectionist Ted Cotton says.

That's approximately 90 people, worldwide, who know how to run a 70 mm IMAX film projector.

Cotton came from Phoenix, as did Joshua Shroyer. Peter Dimopoulos traveled from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The three projectionists are contracted with IMAX for the four weeks of showtimes currently on sale. They'll share time in the booth with Shane Kaiser, a regional technician with Brenden. With up to five screenings a day of a roughly three-hour movie, they'll make sure someone oversees the film reel each day from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m.

"You can't leave the booth. … This is heavy-duty stuff. It's heavy machinery," Cotton explains. "So one of us is always here. We're monitoring, listening, watching the show quality and making sure every show runs up to the specific IMAX standards."

As Dimopoulos notes, "It's not so much running it. It's about (being there) when things go wrong."

A technological first

So why all the fuss?

"The Odyssey" is the first movie shot entirely with IMAX film cameras, because of the distracting amount of noise they make. Matt Damon, who stars as the king of Ithaca who sets out on an epic quest to return home following the Trojan War, has described the experience as like having someone running a blender in your face. ("The Odyssey" rounded out its cast with the likes of Tom Holland, Zendaya, Anne Hathaway, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o and Charlize Theron.)

With 2008's "The Dark Knight," writer-director Nolan used roughly 28 minutes of IMAX film footage, primarily for action sequences and establishing shots. He's been pushing the boundaries of what those cameras can handle ever since.

Before filming "The Odyssey," Nolan went to IMAX executives to see if they could perfect the muffled camera casing known as "the blimp" they nearly completed for 2020's "Tenet."

This time, it was a success. And, with the advancements IMAX had made with its cameras, the technology was finally quiet enough to record dialogue.

In Nolan's previous uses of IMAX footage, the movie's image would expand to fill the top and bottom of the screen, then revert to its original aspect ratio. By filming all of "The Odyssey" that way, the entirety of the movie will fill every inch of Brenden's mammoth screen.

'You can't get that picture with digital'

While the size definitely matters, what really sets 70 mm IMAX apart is the clarity. Most movie theaters can muster 2K or 4K resolution. IMAX film delivers images somewhere in the neighborhood of 16K to 18K.

"You can't get that picture with digital," Brenden's Kaiser says. "It's unreal how awesome that picture quality is."

"You can't beat the floor-to-ceiling picture," Brenden general manager Taylor Mirasol notes. "It's completely immersive."

A 5-month effort

"I think it's really just exciting for us to be put back on the map," Mirasol says.

That excitement is contagious.

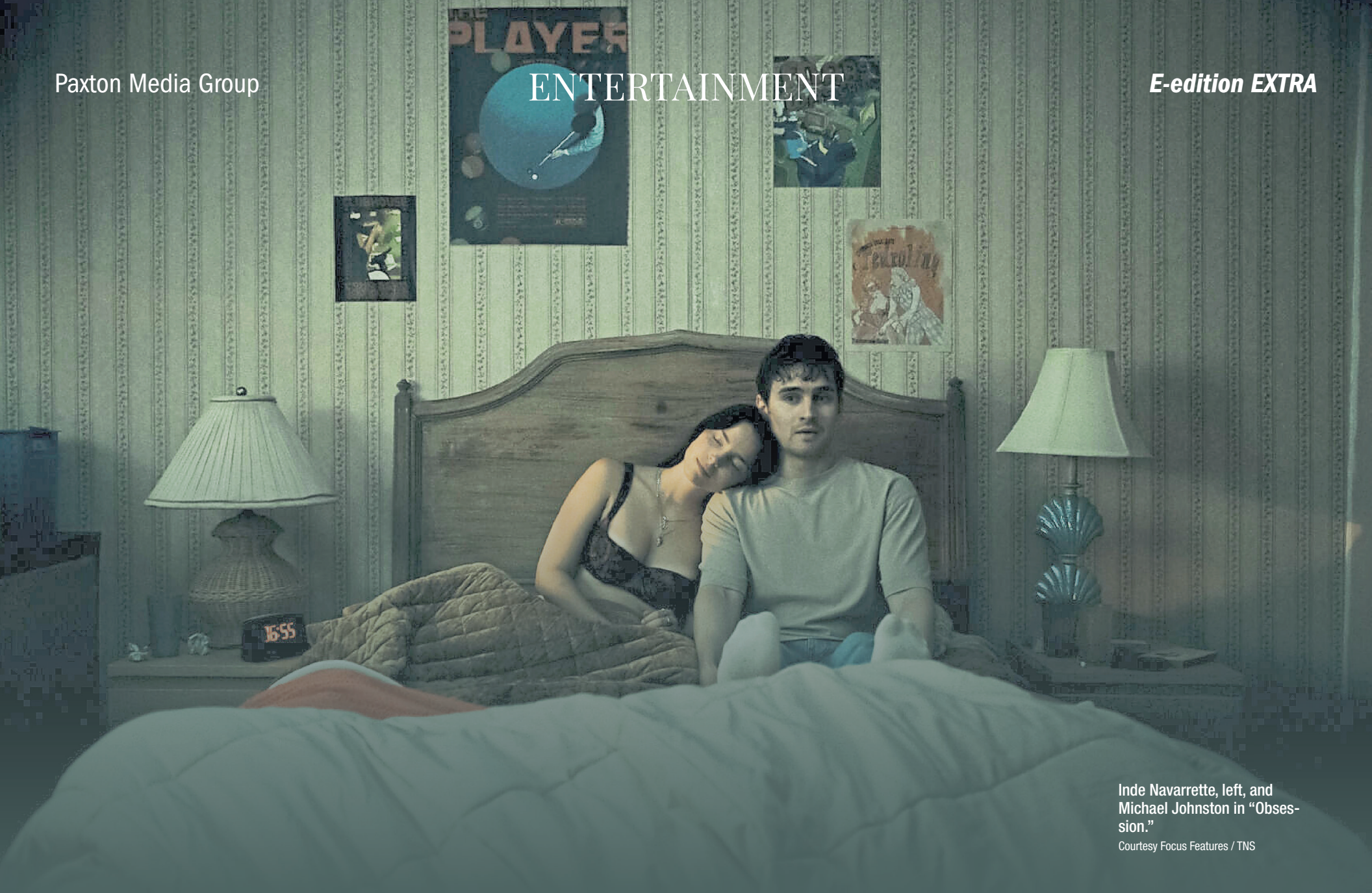
"It's such a nostalgic feeling," says Kaiser, who hadn't gotten to thread film into a projector in the dozen years between "Interstellar" and the arrival of "The Odyssey" print. "It's almost like vinyl. It's coming back. It's crazy to see."

When it comes to working with 70 mm IMAX again, Cotton, the projectionist, is more succinct: "It's heaven."

Johnny Brenden, the theater chain's owner and namesake, has always been a fan of IMAX, VP of operations Eichinger says. Ted Mann, Brenden's grandfather who built the 450-theater circuit Mann Theatre Corp. that included Mann's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, owned IMAX for a time, he notes.

With the recent upgrades, Brenden Theatres is back in the rotation for future 70 mm IMAX releases, starting with "Dune: Part Three" on Dec. 18.

"It's been a five-month effort," Eichinger says, "but it's been out of excitement and appreciation to have this back again."



Inde Navarrette, left, and Michael Johnston in "Obsession."
Courtesy Focus Features / TNS

Hollywood's big bet

Inside the industry's race to acquire internet stories

By CERYS DAVIES
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Last month, veteran Hollywood producer Roy Lee got three calls in a single day from executives at three different studios. Each believed they had found the next internet-native short poised to become a Hollywood blockbuster – an online monster named Siren Head – and each was ready to make an offer and wanted Lee's help to develop a movie.

The frenzy traces back to the enduring global box-office runs of two low-budget horror films, Curry Barker's "Obsession" and Kane Parsons' "Backrooms," which have earned $403 million and $349 million, respectively. Studios have become fixated on hunting down every short film, internet meme and indie video game with the potential to "put something new and fresh on the screen," Lee said.

"In the past, whenever we were putting together movies with the studios, they would resort to going back to safer bets with filmmakers who've made movies before," Lee said, whose L.A.-based horror production company, Spooky Pictures, secured three Barker films before "Obsession" hit theaters. "But because of the [ongoing] success, bosses are going to their lower-level executives saying, 'You better find the next person and bring them to us.'"

The race for Hollywood to capture new-age internet intellectual property, or IP, is well underway. And, in some cases, it's happening on terms decided by the online creators themselves, according to interviews with agents and producers.

A new kind of scouting

Mining the internet for the next big thing isn't a new idea. What's changed is how major studios approach the creators behind it. In the past, studios have plucked influencers from their online niche and slotted them into whatever mainstream production needed a face. Under the precedent set by Barker and Parsons, studios are now looking to acquire a fully developed idea from creators who already have a built-in audience, agents say.

The industry has long been criticized for leaning too hard on sequels, franchises and remakes led by well-seasoned directors. But after "Obsession" and "Backrooms" were released, it became clear what kind of story could still pull audiences into a theater. Both films came from digital-native storytellers in their 20s who arrived with sizable online followings already attached. In the wake of their success, Parsons is reportedly working on a "Backrooms" sequel for A24, and Barker has another horror movie in the works for Universal Film Group.

"Hollywood is realizing that they have to take more chances," said Jordan Lonner, Barker's agent at United Talent Agency. "You have to take those leaps to attract a younger audience. They can feel when something is authentic and that they're being served something by filmmakers that actually understand them, versus when they're being served by a big corporate giant."

Creators are calling the shots

As Hollywood looks to the internet for answers, agents and executives say creators may soon have more leverage than ever at the negotiating table. For example, creators probably will retain ownership and control of their IP, said Ty Flynn, a partner and agent at UTA's Creators division.

A24 / TNS

Chiwetel Ejiofor in "Backrooms."

"[Creators] can really have the final say in the creative oversight of their project," Flynn said. "It's definitely something that is unique to the space, because they're obviously the masters of their audience. They know better than anyone else how their audience responds. It's in the best interest of any partner to [have it] play out, versus trying to control it from the start."

While creators break into the mainstream, their representatives say traditional companies are growing more comfortable betting on digital stars. UTA's roster includes Alix Earle, Jake Shane and Markiplier – the last of whom recently landed his own box-office breakthrough with "Iron Lung." The YouTuber, whose real name is Mark Fischbach, self-financed the horror film for $3 million, distributed it on his own and earned roughly $50 million in 4,000 theaters worldwide.

Creative Artists Agency is also teaming up with private equity firm TPG to buy creator-led companies.

Kori Adelson, president of North Road Films – one of the financiers behind "Backrooms" – predicts this shift also will change how studios weigh "price point to risk." If major companies are willing to diversify their budgets, she said, it could open the door for small-, mid- and big-budget projects to reach a wider range of viewers.

"There's a direct relationship between budget and authenticity," Adelson said. "The bigger the budget, the more protections that are in place to ensure that it makes money, because the investment is so big, so you are by definition not able to take risks. And the lower the price point is, the more freedom you have to be bold and to take big swings and to be original."

Even before the release of "Obsession" and "Backrooms," multiple studios competed for the theatrical rights to the popular online video game "99 Nights in the Forest," hosted on Roblox. Disney's 20th Century ultimately won, with the game's developers signing on as executive producers.

"Studio people were bending over backwards to make all these promises that would never happen in the past," Lee said.

There are limits to this model, however

Replicating this success at scale won't be easy, said Paul Dergarabedian, head of marketplace trends for Rentrak. Because major studios operate with far bigger budgets, he said, the low-budget, indie playbook doesn't simply transfer over.

"The whole point is that ['Obsession' and 'Backrooms'] were made by independent filmmakers with very modest budgets," Dergarabedian said. "It makes sense that everyone's looking for what's next, but it's not an easy task. Both of those films came about very organically and authentically."

Many studios will remain "inherently risk-averse," said Darrell Miller, an L.A.-based entertainment lawyer – largely because of how much cash flow they need just to operate. He said, "Obsession's" $403 million worldwide gross is a "big win" for Focus Features, the indie distributor backed by Universal, but it doesn't compare to what a major studio needs from a tentpole release.

"Major studios have to generate over a billion to pay for the overhead, the operation and the size of their business model," Miller said. "Blockbusters average between $200 [million] and $400 million [to make] and they're spending another one to two times for marketing. The major studio game is much bigger."

Every film, regardless of budget, carries a degree of unpredictability. Plenty of indie productions flop at the box office or never land distribution at all – just as plenty of big-budget releases continue to resonate with mass audiences. "Toy Story 5," for one, has taken the 31-year-old franchise to new heights. The animated film, made with a budget between $150 million and $200 million, has earned upward of $763 million globally less than a month after its release.

Some creators are saying no

Even as studios chase internet-native IP, some of the most sought-after creators are turning them down. For Luke Pounder and Tristan Tales of L.A.-based TalesVision, traditional Hollywood isn't the goal. The duo, known for fictional young adult content on YouTube, plans to keep leveling up their material while keeping it native to the internet.

"We never wait on a green light from anyone to tell the stories that we want to tell, and social media has already given us that opportunity," Tales said.

The pair had been in talks with traditional studios about a few of their ideas, but timeline constraints and the potential loss of creative control steered them away. Even as creators become bigger stakeholders in these deals, for Pounder and Tales, that still isn't enough.

Later this year, they'll launch their first premium series, "Lostlings," with Lion Forge Entertainment. The eight-episode, half-hour series will premiere on their own YouTube channel.

"YouTube isn't just like this discovery platform where you pluck the talent or the IP and then throw it into the traditional system. YouTube can be that next phase as well, where you take the talent or the IP and distribute it on there," Pounder said. "YouTube has to catch up to its creators and their ambitions."

Meanwhile, the competitive bidding war for the internet urban legend Siren Head closed last week, with Warner Bros. winning the theatrical rights for an undisclosed amount. The film will be directed by Brian Duffield ("No One Will Save You") and co-written by Zach Cregger ("Weapons"). Trevor Henderson, the artist who created the monster online, will serve as an executive producer.

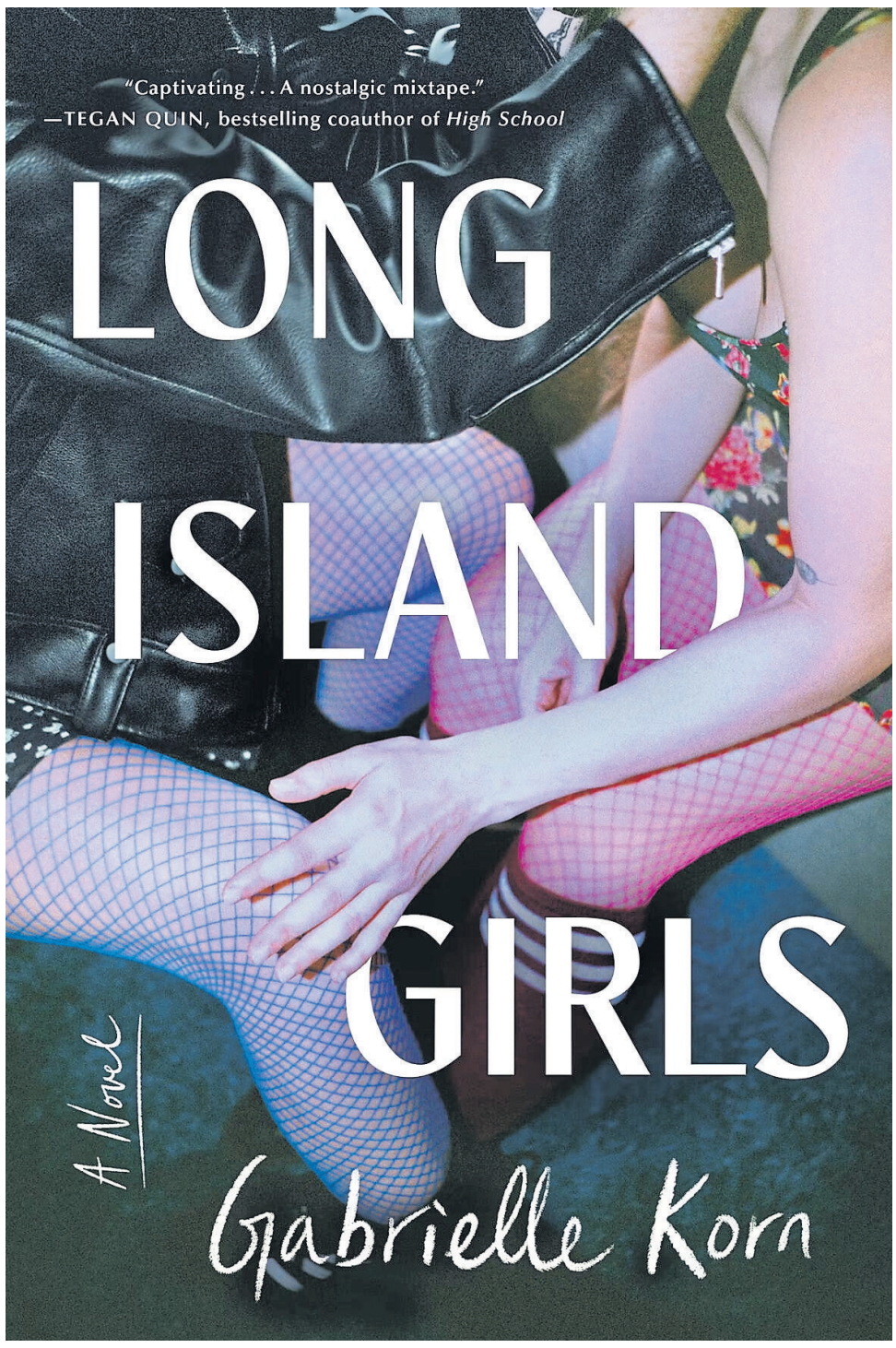
Lee, who will serve as a producer on the "Siren Head" movie, sees this as just the beginning.

"We're talking about making films the traditional way using the talent that learns their craft either by doing shorts on YouTube, or doing things in a non-traditional manner."

BOOKS

Her buzzy new novel is a millennial time capsule, *dripping with American Apparel and AIM angst*

By EMILY ST. MARTIN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)



St. Martin's Press / TNS

If you've ever pirated music from LimeWire on your parent's desktop PC, bought an American Apparel LBD from a thrift store in a pinch or chatted with your crush on AOL Instant Messenger, Gabrielle Korn's "Long Island Girls" may be the millennial time capsule you've been longing for.

"Specificity is the gateway to universality," Korn says from a corner table at Silver Lake's Botanica. "When you're alone with a story for so long, people saying they relate to it is the best gift."

The former editor in chief of Nylon (a.k.a. the 2000s' ultimate indie culture and fashion glossy), Korn's penned a collection of essays, "Everybody (Else) Is Perfect: How I Survived Hypocrisy, Beauty, Clicks, and Likes," and two cli-fi dystopian novels, "Yours for the Taking" and "The Shutouts."

Her new book, which hit bookshop shelves in June, is a pivot for the author. Korn says she doesn't think about genre when she sits down to write, but this one draws from her own experience working in media, "specifically the Nylon of it all."

"Long Island Girls" spills over with cultural references and generational nods that place readers in a time machine, with destinations that explore Long Island in the aughts, Brooklyn in 2010 and modern-day Los Angeles. The novel follows Susan, a queer creative untangling the coulda, woulda, shoulda situationship that has spanned decades, while grappling with the reality of a career that dips and shifts in a changing media landscape.

"I think the angst – it's anger, and sadness," Korn says as she takes a sip of her matcha latte. "She had to invent herself … she is making up her life as she goes."

The Times sat down with Korn to chat about nostalgia, the coming-of-age-queer experience and making art under capitalism.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Are you the voice of the Indie Sleaze generation?

A: I don't think that's for me to decide.

Q: What is the timeline for a past era to officially become nostalgic?

A: I didn't set out to write something nostalgic. That word did not occur to me until we were talking about marketing. I was trying to capture specific time periods, and then I think in the process of doing that, and the process of having a character who's constantly looking back on those time periods, it by default starts to feel nostalgic, but that wasn't really top of mind.

What's so funny is I think we all thought we were having this very niche alt experience. But if we were all having it, then is it really niche? Or was it actually very mainstream?

We all thought we were so edgy and alternative.

We were on the edge.

Q: The book jumps from the age of 17 – when teens feel like they're an adult, but they're not – to then being 22, 27, 32 and 37. What was it like trying to pinpoint those experiences?

A: I feel like I carry all of those versions of myself – it's actually not that hard to think like a 17 year old or a 21 year old, so it was really fun. One thing I wanted to capture about early adulthood is the constant humiliation. The thing about being young is that people are so mean to you and they're constantly taking advantage, and they're so resentful of your youth, but you don't understand that it's resentment, you just think everybody hates you.

It's a very vulnerable period of time when you're trying to figure out what it means to be an adult who can take care of yourself, and the people who are supposed to be mentoring you are just making fun of you all the time, especially at work – that was really important to me to show.

Then the added layers of trying to date as a queer person from a conservative suburb. I felt like if I could make myself cringe, then it was working.

Q: I think of the character Jonny as this amazing, queer, fairy godmother. Was that Jonny's purpose when you were writing?

A: Yeah, it was. I wanted to give her someone who would be her guiding light – the kind of person we all wish that we had had. Also through him, we get to watch as Susan becomes disillusioned with the thing that she idolized the most: the music industry.

He is this hero to her, and the more she gets to know him, the more she realizes how hard his life is, and how poorly he's treated, and the fact that he's working his ass off at a day job to support his music, instead of being this kind of successful free spirit that she assumed he was, and so, through getting to know him, she starts to understand who has a right to make art under capitalism.

That reminds me of my favorite line from the book, when Susan learns that Ramona (front woman of t he Monas) is living in a professionally cleaned brownstone that her parents pay for and thinks, "I'm just learning a lot about who gets to make art in this city."

I think that there's so much free labor that goes into making art that comes out in any form, whether it's publishing a book or painting or writing for TV, or whatever it is, you're doing it for free until someone pays you, and that's such a luxury.

I realized it when I started writing my first book, while working full time, and only having nights and mornings to do it. When I started working at Netflix in L.A., we would have these creator meetings and hearing about how long they had been working on something before Netflix bought it, I just started to feel like I have no idea how anybody is affording to make anything unless there's a secret financial thing that we just don't know about.

Q: You've said that this is the most vulnerable book you've ever written. Why?

A: I put so much of my feelings into it. It's completely fiction. Susan is not me. Her story is very much her own story, but I feel like I put everything I know about life and love and friendship into it, and in a way that makes it feel very raw.

My other books were really focused on making a point – they're climate fiction, with mostly queer characters, and they're very political. The stakes are global. In a way, they're much bigger books, and more complicated too. "Long Island Girls," to me, is about like relationships and feelings.

Q: Let's talk about the angst and awkwardness of teenage attraction.

A: I think that to realize that you're queer in the early 2000s when there were no role models and everybody was so homophobic, it really took an act of bravery. When we first meet her, she's not a super brave character, she is a rule follower, she is the designated driver, literally and metaphorically. Even though she appears really edgy, she's trying so hard to be good. So her queerness is kind of counter to her self-image and once she embraces it, she embraces it.

Q: Do you have a playlist for this book?

A: Yes, it's public. It's called "Long Island Girls" and it's just my name on Spotify. I made it after I was done, but it's a lot of the music I was listening to while I was writing, and it's a lot of the references from the book. So anytime Susan mentions a song, I put it on the playlist. It's very much Susan's playlist.

Q: If you had to curate a quick three-book reading list that complements "Long Island Girls," what would you pick?

A: "A Visit From the Goon Squad" by Jennifer Egan. "Deep Cuts" by Holly Brickley. "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow" by Gabrielle Zevin.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, July 4, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Yesteryear. Caro Claire Burke. Knopf
2. The Calamity Club. Kathryn Stockett. Spiegel & Grau
3. Whistler. Ann Patchett. Harper
4. Six of Crows: A Darker Shore. Leigh Bardugo. Insight
5. The Shampoo Effect. Jenny Jackson. Viking/Dorman
6. Our Perfect Storm. Carley Fortune. Berkley
7. Land. Maggie O'Farrell. Knopf
8. Rocket's Red Glare. Patterson/Eversmann. Little, Brown
9. It Could Have Been Her. Lisa Jewell. Atria
10. Weddings. Danielle Steel. Delacorte

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Cancel Me If You Can. Dave Portnoy. Gallery
2. Regime Change. Haberman/Swan. Simon & Schuster
3. Communion. JD Vance. Harper
4. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
5. Revolution. Eric Metaxas. Odysseus
6. The Land and Its People. David Sedaris. Little, Brown
7. Courage Can Save Us. Rye Barcott. Bloomsbury
8. The Art of Star Wars: Andor. Phillip Szostak. Abrams
9. The Way of the Wildflower. Ruth Chou Simons. Thomas Nelson
10. The King Is Coming. John Bevere. Thomas Nelson

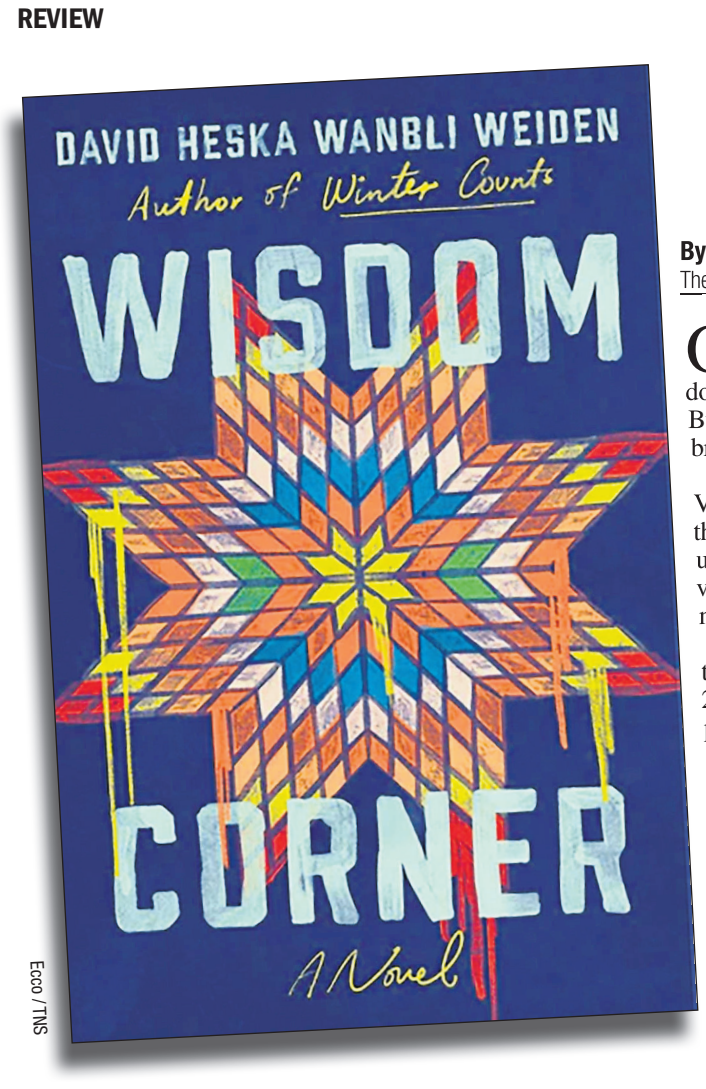
Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. Tempting Venom. Rina Kent. Bloom
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
4. The Divorce. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
5. Knicker Bonkers. Triumph
6. The Housemaid's Wedding. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
7. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
8. Murdoku. Manuel Garand. Puzzlewright
9. Want to Know a Secret? Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
10. Dear Debbie. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

A butt-kicking Lakota man ponders violence in 'Wisdom Corner'



Ecco / TNS

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

On some level, the hero of David Heska Wanbli Weiden's "Wisdom Corner" knows he's too violent. But can he get that message from his bruised knuckles to his brain?

"I'd gotten in two fights in a week," Virgil Wounded Horse tells us in the thriller. "I'd tried to handle both situations calmly, but each had turned violent. And I had to be honest with myself – that's what I'd wanted."

"Wisdom Corner" is a throwback to hard-boiled thrillers of the mid-20th century in which short-tempered, punch-first/ask-questions-later antiheroes thought the only good interview was one that left the witness cowering in terror.

Virgil leaves plenty of carnage in his bloody wake in the taut "Wisdom Corner." He's trying to figure out who murdered his medicine man friend. A Native gang that's trying to monopolize the reservation's booze supply? An unscrupulous politician whose opponent happens to be Virgil's girlfriend, Marie? A mysterious hacker whose efforts to uncover harm at Native American boarding schools are fueled by righteous anger? One of the creeps Virgil leaves behind after "questioning" them with his fists?

Several elements of "Wisdom Corner" recall last year's " Big Chief," by Mankato native Jon Hickey, including the charged run-up to a tribal election and the lingering effects of trauma that's been passed down from Native generation to Native generation ever since colonists stole their land. But thriller fans will notice an even stronger kinship with bestsellers written by S.A. Cosby (" King of Ashes "), whose heroes also seek justice while questioning whether their violent tactics are just as troubling as those of the bad guys they're trying to find/imprison/pummel.

Like Cosby's books, "Wisdom Corner" moves like crazy, with Virgil pursuing leads throughout the southern half of South Dakota while also trying to protect his family from those gang members, who were on the receiving end of his punches in one of the book's first scenes. Marie's attempts to get Virgil to shape up may be working – he's definitely not quite as violence-prone as he was in Weiden's previous thriller, " Winter Counts." His moments of self-reflection ("Ghosts of my enemies drifted before me, all the people I'd beaten, their cries and wails echoing in my head") also suggest an interest in a future that's less vigilante, more peacemaker.

That makes for a strong narrative spine in "Wisdom Corner," but where the novel excels is in Weiden's sure depiction of reservation life and tribal politics (he's an enrolled citizen of South Dakota's Sicangu Lakota Nation). Despite living much of his life on a reservation and being intimately attuned to what goes on there, even Virgil is unaware of some of his people's history. The pieces of it that Weiden shares with us, including a passage about Native athletes' crucial role in the early history of the sport of football, are eye-opening.

The more he learns about his history, the more Virgil seems to be at peace with who he is now. And who he could be in future Weiden novels.

AUTOMOTIVE

Q&A

Rivian CEO RJ Scaringe on how AI will transform autos

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

Rivian CEO RJ Scaringe introduced the Rivian R2 (background) while talking with reporters in Park City, Utah, about a variety of topics, including his new Mind Robotics company.

PARK CITY, Utah — If the early 20th-century auto revolution was sparked in Detroit by entrepreneurs like Ford, Dodge, and Sloan, the early 21st century has brought a new, digital auto revolution on America's West Coast right out of a science fiction novel.

At its forefront are entrepreneurs like Sergei Brin of Google, Tesla's Elon Musk, and Rivian's RJ Scaringe.

"I think it's the most exciting time in human history," Scaringe said at the media launch of his Tesla Model Y fighter, the electric R2, in Utah's Wasatch Mountains. "We happen to be alive at this moment in human history, where we are creating intelligence that can do tasks humans can do."

With rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, computer chips, and electronics, these entrepreneurs envision a robot-driven future that will not only transform the automobile, but also the workplace in which they are made.

"There's going to be thousands of people collaborating alongside these robots," Scaringe said. "They're going to take a picture: 'Hey, check this out. My coworker's name is Phil, and he's a robot.'"

Brin pioneered the Waymo robot car ferrying passengers on U.S. streets. Musk brought point-to-point hands-free driving to his Tesla model lineup and is transforming his factories to build humanoid robots.

Scaringe, who has raised over a billion dollars for his company, Mind Robotics, said robotics is transforming Rivian. Not only will the R2 drive itself, but an AI-driven revolution is at our doorstep.

Detroit News auto columnist Henry Payne sat down with Scaringe and other media representatives at a recent roundtable to discuss.

DETROIT NEWS: You started a robotics company?

SCARINGE: Yes. The company was formed late last year ... focused on developing extremely capable robots with human-like skills to do manufacturing. We've raised a little over $1 billion dollars (the company is valued at $3.4 billion). We haven't shown anything yet, so we're very stealth.

I think it's the most exciting time in human history where you really take a step back. We are creating intelligence that can do tasks humans can do. This is the first in the history of our planet – certainly the first in the history of our species.

The rate at which AI is moving is ... an order of magnitude faster than the average person in society understands.

That's going to be a particularly big challenge, in the short term, to have the average person .... realize how fast the models are learning and how capable they are at doing almost everything.

I'm seeing it first-hand in the case of a car. Like training robots to do hard tasks around manipulation, or plugging in wiring harnesses, or manipulating things like carpet sets. All these things that we used to think would be impossible for robots are very much not science fiction.

This is going to be reality – and not in 10 years. In a couple of years.

INC.: One of the big things automakers have struggled with is getting robots to, say, plug in a wire harness, because that is a fine motor skill that neither cameras nor sensors can actually handle. With the advancements in AI moving as quickly as they are, are you seeing that change when it comes to the manufacturing line?

SCARINGE: Go into any manufacturing plant – whether Rivian, Toyota, GM, or Tesla – you'll see thousands of robots doing ... geometrically repeatable tasks. In the vast majority of body shops, there are no humans doing any of the welding. In contrast, if you go into general assembly – let's say putting trim into the vehicle or seats or wiring harnesses – you have (tasks) that are highly repeatable, but they're not geometrically identical. So (humans are) picking an object out of a bin (and) putting it into the car in a slightly different way each time.

There's zero AI. To move to a robot that has both high capability for decision-making and the ability to do dexterous manipulation, it requires a different type of model.

(Along comes) this idea of ... large neural nets or foundation models. Large Language Models took very broad knowledge – all the embodied knowledge of the Internet – and converted it into foundation models that could interpret the world through the written word. Very similar to how a human would.

You can use it to drive a car, so we've approached our self-driving platform that way. But, importantly, you can also use it to operate a robot.

CNBC: When are you going to be ready to show what you're working on?

Scaringe: Less than a year. It's different than a car, because you can work on it for a long time and ... use proving grounds and camouflage.

In the case of a (Mind) robot ... we're going to be deploying inside Rivian's production plant. The moment we start to deploy there's going to be thousands of people collaborating alongside these robots. They're going to like take a picture.

'Hey, check this out. My coworker's name is Phil, and he's a robot.'

I think there's also a big perception, like jobs are going to be lost. We've got the messaging upside down on this as a country because there is an extreme lack of like labor.

It's not like there's a line of people ... waiting to work in manufacturing. We don't have enough people, especially if we want to bring any level of manufacturing back into the United States. We're competing with hospitality that pays half of what we pay – and people still prefer to be in hospitality, because it's a lot easier.

(If) you worked in manufacturing, you stood all day doing a highly repetitive task, five days a week, 50 weeks a year. We didn't, as a species, evolve to do that type of work.

INC.: There is a lack of skilled workforce that can go into a manufacturing line. Do you think that that's more of an educational function? What is the mechanism you think should be supporting that, so that we're not replacing jobs with AI robots?

SCARINGE: When I created Mind, I set aside a portion of the equity to answer that question.

The honest answer is we, as society, have not yet honestly acknowledged how much needs to change – in particular with our education systems. We talk about this in the context of manufacturing, but this is true for every job. There's not a single job in our economy that doesn't have an impact from AI. The nature of the work – whether you're an accountant, attorney, medical doctor, automotive technician, whether you're working in a manufacturing plant – all those jobs are going to change fundamentally because we have these extremely powerful tools.

This is like going from a typewriter to computer on steroids.

Our policymakers need to get serious about this and recognize we can't ignore that AI is coming. It's going to have enormous impacts on the fabric of society, and we need to prep our kids, we need to prep our existing workforce.

THE VERGE: In the autonomy race, investors seem far more excited about investing in autonomy than in batteries. What's your take on the value of autonomous vehicles?

SCARINGE: Autonomy is going to represent one of the biggest shifts in how we think about a vehicle.

We're deploying a disproportionately large amount of capital into that. The rate at which things are progressing is far faster than our own mental models have been built to think. Thirty-six months ago, the prevailing way to approach (autonomy) was a rules-based approach. Twenty-four months ago, most folks (realized) that moving to a neural net-based approach to drive the vehicle was the winning technical approach.

We're going to see a very different rate of progress for autonomy between 2026 and 2031 than we've seen between 2021 and 2026. For so long, since the DARPA challenge years ago, we've been saying: 'oh, autonomy is a few years away.' (The) big technology inflection point of shifting from rules-based models (to) foundation models ... now unlock capabilities that seem like science fiction. By early 2030, buying a car that doesn't have Level 4 *(Ed. Note: L4 is full-self driving, no human needed. Rivian's current, hands-free Level 2 requires driver attention)* will be a pretty foreign concept. It'll be like buying a car without a steering wheel.

THE VERGE: Level 4 functionality for your company?

SCARINGE: Yeah, we've said 2028 for full Level 4.

The idea that the country is going to move away from car ownership is unlikely. The vast majority of miles are going to be owned. Whether that's 70 percent or 90 percent, I don't know. But the reason that's important is I think owned Level 4 will become very important. The idea that your car can drop you at the airport, then pick up your kids from school, (then) run to the grocery store and pick up things for you – that's a very real outcome.

We'll have new choices owning Level 4. Do I need more cars in my household? Do I just use a robot taxi service? Does my car go out and work for me during the day?

AUTO REVIEW

Nissan ruined the Pathfinder once – does the 2026 model finally redeem itself?

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

If you're old enough, you might remember that the Nissan Pathfinder once was an SUV in the old sense of the word: muddy, brutish, and vaguely threatening. It looked like it drank diesel for breakfast and head-butted boulders for fun. And then, in 2013, Nissan transformed the Pathfinder into a rolling apology. It swapped its steel-toe boots and Carhartt jacket for loafers and a cardigan. Any sense of purpose evaporated thanks to former Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn, who managed to upset enthusiasts, dealers, and several governments simultaneously. That, quite frankly, is talent, even if a bit misguided.

Nevertheless, since its 2022 redesign, the Pathfinder winks at its rugged past like a middle-aged man in leather pants at a high school reunion. It's got some tougher looks, a proper automatic instead of that abysmal CVT, and terrain modes that lend it pretensions of capability. But underneath, it's still a front-wheel-drive SUV with a V-6 rather than a true body-on-frame bruiser with a howling V-8.

Nissan, so it seems, decided that the best way to improve its three-row rugrat wagon is not to give it more power, more ability or more of anything that would make grown men grin. No. They've taken it to a plastic surgeon. What it receives instead is a nose job: a redesigned grille, new front and rear bumpers, fresh lighting elements and, because this is the modern car industry, a new set of wheels, presumably because the old ones were no longer on trend. Inside, there's a new 12.3-inch infotainment touchscreen with standard wireless Apple CarPlay and wireless Android Auto and a wireless smartphone charging pad with integrated cooling.

In short, it hasn't gone on a diet, learned a new language, or taken up weightlifting. It's had its face done, bought some new clothes and redecorated the living room.

The Pathfinder's 3.5-liter V-6 distributes its 284 horsepower and 259 pound-feet of torque through a nine-speed transmission to the front wheels. Tick the right box and it'll drive all four, which immediately makes it feel like it's put on boots instead of Crocs. There's a terrain system with Sport, Eco, Snow, and Tow modes and a 3,500-pound towing rating if you're only powering two wheels. Go all-wheel drive, though, and suddenly it considers itself an off-road hero, adding Sand and Mud/Rut modes and doubling down with a 6,000-pound towing limit.

James Lipman / Nissan Motor Corporation / TNS

Power is perfectly adequate. Put your foot down for an overtake and there's a brief pause while the gearbox consults its diary and decides how it's feeling before downshifting. Sport mode sharpens the steering and wakes up the throttle, but leaves the shift logic exactly as lethargic as before. Best grab the paddle shifters and do it yourself, which feels satisfyingly racy.

The steering is light and the body doesn't suddenly flop over. Instead, the lean builds progressively, giving you plenty of warning. You notice bumps, but they don't punch you in the spine, as the suspension has been softened just enough to survive the occasional excursion off the tarmac. That said, it's very clear this thing prefers asphalt to adventure. Once the road turns to dirt, its wide turning circle, very much a front-wheel-drive Nissan trait, makes it feel like you're turning around a ferry in a canal.

Still, point it down a gravel track and it'll cope without complaint, provided you're not attempting anything that involves boulders, winches, or a YouTube channel. Throughout all of this, it remains impressively quiet inside, with road noise kept at bay.

Visibility is generally good, unless you look directly out the back, where a forest of headrests blocks your view. The seats are comfortable and the second row is properly spacious. The third row is tighter, although there's enough room for three normally proportioned adults, assuming they're friendly. Getting back there is easier than most, and the captain's chairs are split by a removable console that thoughtfully lifts out with one hand.

While it doesn't actually go anywhere that matters in the SUV universe, the towing figures tick the right boxes, the interior feels grown-up, and it looks more purposeful than the bloated kiddie trolley it replaced. It remembers what it's supposed to be, harkening back to the old Pathfinders while borrowing a few no-nonsense cues from Nissan's current trucks.

And this matters, because this car has spent far too long wandering the desolate wasteland of suburban parking lots, forgotten and unloved. No, it's not the rock-climbing, axle-twisting brute it once was. And this Pathfinder still punts personality out the window in favor of mainstream blandness. Has it redeemed itself? Not really. It's just a less confused SUV that reminds you more of a sensible sedan on stilts than the go-anywhere legend its name once carried. But at least it dresses the part.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2026 Nissan Pathfinder

Base price: $38,995

Engine: 3.5-liter DOHC V6

Horsepower/Torque: 284/259 pound-feet of torque

EPA fuel economy (combined): 23 mpg

Length/Width/Height: 114.2/197.7/77.9 inches

Ground clearance: 7.1 inches

Cargo capacity: 16.6-80.5 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 3,500-6,000 pounds

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Smart thermostat's temperature sensors make it stand out

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Upgrading from a basic thermostat to a smart thermostat offers many advantages, with the most significant being long-term energy savings. By optimizing your heating and cooling system, a smart thermostat can often pay for itself through lower utility bills. In addition, you can control your thermostat remotely from your smartphone; many models integrate with voice assistants, and installation is typically quick and straightforward.

That brings me to my preferred brand of smart thermostats: **Honeywell's X8S Wi-Fi smart thermostat**. Honeywell room sensors are what make them stand far and away as the leader in home temperature control. Typically, a thermostat is installed in a hallway or another convenient location, not in an area where the exact temperature reading is critical.

The sensors ($44.99 each) can be placed wherever they're needed – your living room, bedroom, office or other frequently used spaces. For example, if you place a sensor in your bedroom, the Honeywell X8S can prioritize that room at night, maintaining your desired temperature for as long as you choose.

Multiple locations are not a problem; just one in each location. Sensors have a range of up to 200 feet, depending on the home's construction. They are easily controlled on the First Alert app or the X8S's display.

Installing the Honeywell X8S is easy; I've done many of them. I like to think of thermostat installation as color-by-number. The wires are color-coded according to an industry standard. Before you disconnect your old unit, it's a great idea to take a quick photo of the setup. And of course, if you're not confident, you can hire a professional to hook it up for you.

Once it's connected, the Honeywell X8S brings your temperature control and cost savings to the home, which you can control on the 5-inch touchscreen or the app. The display shows current time, indoor humidity, outdoor temperature, your set temperature and all the thermostat controls. Schedules can be set based on your comfort needs to maximize energy efficiency.

The This Matter-enabled and Energy Star-certified Honeywell X8S is also compatible with video doorbells. If you have a First Alert VX1 or a Ring streaming doorbell, you can use the thermostat display to speak to and see the video doorbell. It also works with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Apple Home voice assistants.
Honeywell / TNS

How many times have you left your home for the day with the AC turned down or the heat turned up? If your answer is never, you're lying, but that's OK. A great advantage of the X8S is its smart features, and its auto-away feature puts money in your pocket. With the feature enabled (your choice), it will sense occupancy and adjust settings accordingly.

Honeywell specifications for the X8S state that it will work with "Up to 4 Heat/2 Cool Heat Pump systems; Up to 3 Heat/4 Cool for conventional systems." A C-Wire is required. A wall plate, screws and anchors are included.

The This Matter-enabled and Energy Star-certified Honeywell X8S is also compatible with video doorbells. If you have a First Alert VX1 or a Ring streaming doorbell, you can use the thermostat display to speak to and see the video doorbell. It also works with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and Apple Home voice assistants.

https://www.honeywellhome.com/products/x8s-smart-thermostat; $219.99

An informal survey of two group texts produced some surprising results. In the first group of six friends, no one had a carbon monoxide detector in their home. A second survey of five more friends yielded just one person who did. Combined, that's only one out of 11 people, or just over 9 percent, with a carbon monoxide detector.

My follow-up text consisted of information I got from an AI search for the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning: "Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can be extremely dangerous and potentially fatal, even after relatively short exposure. It's sometimes called the 'silent killer' because CO is colorless, odorless and tasteless, so people often don't realize they're being exposed to it. Carbon monoxide binds to hemoglobin in your blood about 200-250 times more strongly than oxygen, preventing oxygen from reaching your organs and tissues. This can quickly affect the brain and heart."

Enough said. That brings me to the **X-Sense Smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarm (model SC07-W)**, another do-it-yourself project that adds a single unit to your safety devices, monitoring for smoke and dangerous carbon monoxide gas in a single compact unit for home or commercial use.

One feature that stood out to me in the UL-Certified alarm is the 10-year sealed battery for long-lasting safety. Think about that compared to many traditional alarms, which need a battery changed yearly and always seem to chirp an alert about a dead battery in the middle of the night.

The 10-year cycle replaces the yearly inconvenience of frequent battery replacement, which is often overlooked. A sticker on the side of the alarm has the recommended replacement date.

The all-in-one alarm is easy to install and has an advanced dual-sensor technology. A bracket is included and can be hung from a ceiling, wall, or any flat surface. Once the bracket is installed with the included hardware, twist on the alarm, and you're done.

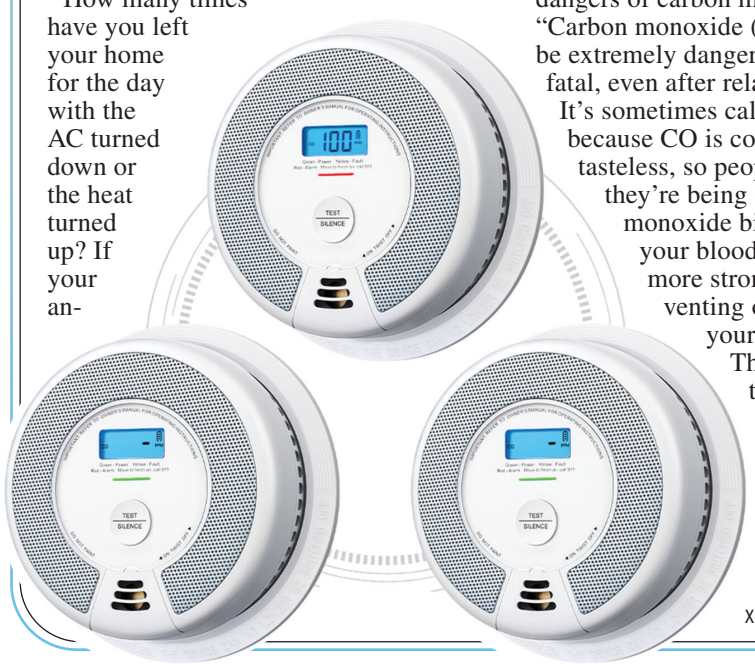
Inside X-Sense, a photoelectric sensor will detect smoke particles from potential fire hazards. An electrochemical sensor detects carbon monoxide. A display on the front shows CO levels and device updates in real time. There's also a test/silence button.

With its wireless interconnection, up to 24 X-Sense SC07-W alarms can be purchased and linked to create a network. Then, when one of the connected alarms has a danger detection, they all go off, alerting a larger area of the potential danger. According to X-Sense, the alarm closest to the source flashes red, while all other units alternate between red and green.

The detectors are available individually for $41.39 each, $116.99 for a three-pack, or $224.99 for a six-pack.

https://www.x-sense.com/products/sc07-w-wireless-interconnected-combination-smoke-and-carbon-monoxide-detector

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.



The X-Sense Smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarm (model SC07-W) is a do-it-yourself project that adds a single unit to your safety devices, monitoring for smoke and dangerous carbon monoxide gas in a single compact unit for home or commercial use.
X-Sense / TNS

Recycling your old PC? I'd keep the hard drive

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

This week my question comes from my own family. I had a text exchange with my brother-in-law who wrote, "We have at least one laptop that is broken, but we have information on it. What do we do?"

They actually had two old laptops, and they want to take them in for recycling. He was right to ask what to do about the information on the old drives.

What do you do with a computer when you're ready for it to head to another owner or to the electronics recycler?

If the computer still turns on, you can open Settings, then System, then Recovery and then ask Windows to "Reset this PC."

Then choose "Remove everything," and "clean the drive."

Once this begins, there's no going back, so make sure you have all the files saved off that you want to save.

If you have a laptop that is dead, you'll want to open it up and remove the hard drive, which is what I told my brother-in-law to do. He was a little worried it would be a hassle, but I told him with the right screwdriver it would take less than 5 mintues – especially if he didn't have to worry about putting things back together.

He got the back off the laptop. I forgot to tell him some laptops have captive screws, which means they don't come all the way out when you unscrew them.

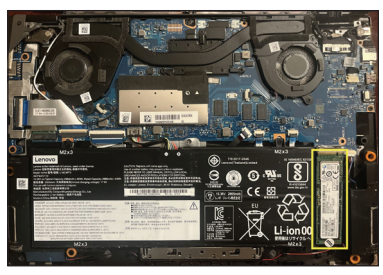
When all the screws are loose, you just pry up the bottom cover and you should expose the internals. My brother-in-law did that, and he wasn't sure where the hard drive was so he sent a photo.

His laptop had a m.2 solid state drive, which looks a bit like a RAM chip.

I circled the drive and told him to peel back a sticker on top to expose a screw that needed to come out. Once the screw is removed, the drive pops up and you just pull it out of its socket.

If you're unsure how to open your computer or which component is the hard drive, do a search at a site like ifixit.com or look to YouTube for advice on how to take apart your specific model.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.



Jim Rossman / TNS
If you have a laptop that is dead, you'll want to open it up and remove the hard drive.

SOUND ADVICE

Freshen up with *quality air purifier* at a bargain price

By DON LINDICH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

The **Mooka M200L Air Purifier** delivers high quality and clean air at a bargain price. The dog in the photo is my little guy Beni! You can read more about him on mylittlegabby.com, a personal website devoted to my two dogs. Beni is a very special little guy and thriving at 16 years old, having just had a birthday in May. I take the very best care of him I can, which led to my discovering this product.

For many years Beni has had an occasional hacking cough, like he is clearing his throat. I have a fantastic veterinarian who examined him thoroughly and said not to worry about it. In February the cough became much more frequent and I was scared it was some kind of cardiac condition developing.

I set a vet appointment immediately and started researching and using Gemini AI to try and track down the cause in the meantime. Gemini suggested some kind of bronchial irritation given his activity level, lack of other symptoms and his ability to walk 6 or 7 miles without strain. Gemini suggested air purifiers to remove airborne irritants and adding humidifiers to my home, given the dry indoor winter air. I immediately bought several Vornado humidifiers and new filters for my big air purifiers, which I had not used in a while. This reversed the problem quickly, and by the time we got to the vet everything was fine and she gave him an excellent bill of health. Still, it was very scary with a much-loved senior dog.

The filters for my now-discontinued purifiers were very expensive, almost as much as a new machine, and the filters need replaced every month, leading to a search for a new air purifier. The Mooka brand is one of the highest rated on Amazon, with uniformly excellent reviews, high praise from pet owners and the reassuring note on the product listing, "most customers keep this item."

This led to the Mooka M200L, recommended especially for pet owners but perfect for general use as well. I bought one and have been delighted with it. It is compact and quiet, can cover 2,200 square feet and does a great job keeping the air in my home clean.

It has a very attractive night light, an aromatherapy diffuser, the controls are clearly marked and very easy to use, and in regular mode a HEPA filter lasts two months. In Eco mode the filters last four months, and original Mooka filters are only $31.99 per two-pack. Mine will pay for itself very quickly in filter savings. I love the compact size, looks and performance and overall it is one of the most satisfying purchases I've made in a while

The Mooka M200L lists for $89.99 and I paid $71.54 for mine. Currently there is a 25 percent off checkout coupon, but using the code CLEANAIR1220 on Amazon reduces it to just $49.49, almost 50 percent off. It's a great way to save on one purifier, or on several for multiple rooms. Highly recommended!

Q. I read your "Backup power and distilling tips for CPAP" column. I travel to the Philippines twice a year with a stopover in Japan, and have a terrible time getting distilled water for my BIPAP machine. Is there a portable travel distiller that is easy to pack and uses 80-240 VAC for power?

– B.L., Sunnyvale, California

A. The H2O 4 X Instant Ion-Distillation Water System is made for travel, does not need power at all and sells for $29.95. The filter cartridge lasts 30 days and makes 3.25 gallons of distilled water. *thecpapshop.com*

Contact Don Lindich at www.soundadvicenews.com and use the "submit question" link on that site.

The Mooka M200L Air Purifier.
Don Lindich / TNS

HOME & GARDEN

Mustard toss pillows with hints of gold at warmth to this master bedroom.
Cathy Hobbs / TNS

DESIGN RECIPES

SAY HELLO TO YELLOW

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

The color of the moment? Yellow.

Every season seems to have a color that captures the mood, and this summer that color is yellow. From soft buttery hues to rich golden tones, yellow is appearing in everything from furniture and textiles to artwork and accessories.

Long associated with the sun, energy and warmth, yellow can instantly brighten a space when used purposefully.

Looking for ways to incorporate yellow into your home décor? Here are some top tips.

■ Start with a "pop of color." If you're hesitant about using yellow, star small by beginning with accessories and accents such as toss pillows, vases or artwork.

■ Choose muted shades as opposed to brighter tones. Soft buttery shades, ochre and even shades of gold tend to feel more sophisticated and timeless than bright, overly saturated yellows.

■ Pair yellow with natural materials. Wood, stone, linen and woven textures help ground yellow and create a balanced, organic look.

■ Use yellow to brighten neutral spaces. A room filled with whites, beiges and grays can benefit from touches of yellow that add warmth and energy.

■ Consider yellow upholstery in moderation. An accent chair, ottoman or bench can provide a cheerful focal point without dominating the room.

■ Balance yellow with black accents. The contrast between yellow and black feels modern, graphic and surprisingly sophisticated.

Mustard colored toss pillows with gold accessories add a touch of glamour in this living room.

Usage of yellow throughout this children's room, creates a strong, playful color palette.

■ Use yellow in rooms that benefit from warmth. Small spaces such as bathrooms, kitchens and even family rooms can be ideal spaces for incorporating this uplifting color.

■ Avoid overdoing it. Yellow works best as an accent rather than the star of the show. A few thoughtfully placed elements will have greater impact than using yellow as an overall dominant color.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

Hints of shades of yellow and ochre create an edgy vibe in a downtown loft.

What should homeowners know before pest problems start?

Most homeowners don't think much about pests until they spot one in the kitchen, hear scratching in the walls or notice damage that suddenly seems impossible to ignore.

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

But by the time pests make themselves obvious, the problem has often been growing quietly for weeks – or even months. The key to avoiding major headaches and costly repairs is understanding what to look for early and taking simple preventative steps before pests become a bigger issue.

First, know that pest problems aren't always seasonal or obvious. While warmer weather often brings ants, mosquitoes and termites into focus, pests like rodents, cockroaches and even carpenter ants can become year-round concerns depending on where you live and the condition of your home. Factors like moisture, small exterior gaps, food access, landscaping and cluttered storage spaces can all make a home more attractive to unwanted visitors. Older homes – or homes that haven't had regular maintenance – can be especially vulnerable.

Just as important is recognizing early warning signs before an infestation grows. Small clues often show up long before you actually see a pest. Droppings in cabinets or near baseboards, scratching noises in walls or ceilings, unexplained wood damage, grease marks along walls, nests in attics or garages, or tiny piles of sawdust-like material near wood can all signal a problem. Outside, homeowners should watch for cracks near foundations, damaged weather stripping, standing water, or overgrown landscaping touching the home – all of which can create easy entry points.

I experienced this firsthand when chipmunks chewed through electrical wiring on my car. At first, it seemed like a small nuisance, but the damage became much bigger than expected and ultimately required portions of the car's electrical work to be redone. It was a reminder that even small pests can create surprisingly expensive problems when left unchecked – and that paying attention to early signs matters more than many homeowners realize.

Andrey Popov / Dreamstime / TNS

Routine inspections and small preventative steps can help homeowners spot pest issues early before they become expensive infestations.

Routine prevention is one of the easiest and most effective ways to avoid pest problems. Start by sealing cracks around doors, windows, pipes and foundations where pests commonly enter. Eliminate standing water, repair leaks and reduce moisture in basements or crawl spaces since damp environments attract everything from termites to cockroaches. Keep food stored in sealed containers, clean crumbs quickly, and regularly inspect storage areas, attics and garages. Outside, trimming shrubs and tree branches away from the house can help reduce easy access points for pests.

It's also wise to consider periodic professional pest inspections, especially if you live in an area prone to termites, rodents or recurring infestations. A trained pest control professional can identify vulnerabilities and early warning signs that homeowners often miss. Catching problems early is almost always more manageable – and less expensive – than waiting until pests cause structural damage or spread throughout the home.

When it comes to costs, prevention is typically far more affordable than treatment and repair. Routine pest prevention or seasonal treatments may cost a few hundred dollars per year, while termite damage, rodent infestations or extensive remediation can quickly cost thousands. In some cases, homeowners may also face repairs to insulation, wiring, drywall or wood structures damaged by pests.

Your home works hard to protect you and your family, and keeping pests out is an important part of protecting that investment. A little attention now – before problems start – can help homeowners avoid stress, unexpected costs and the frustration of dealing with an infestation down the road.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

TRAVEL

The Chattanooga Lookouts mascot welcomes baseball fans to Erlanger Park.

Zayne Spangler / Chattanooga Lookouts / TNS

Check out CHATTANOOGA

By PATTI NICKELL
Tribune News Service (TNS)

On a recent balmy, beautiful spring evening, I fell in love. Not with a man, but with a game ... baseball. No, it wasn't the Yankees or the Rangers that captured my heart. It was the Chattanooga Lookouts.

Yes, you heard me – the Lookouts, Chattanooga's Minor League baseball team, a Southern League affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds.

I've always been more of a football and basketball girl, but the exuberance of both the players and the crowd cheering them on at the city's impressive new Erlanger Park won me over, and reminded me of why so many are enamored of the Boys of Summer.

Chattanoogans may love the Lookouts (named for the mountain that looms over the city and occupies a pivotal place in Civil War history), but they are equally enamored of the $115 million stadium designed as a year-round entertainment venue.

Erlanger Park is the most exciting thing to happen to this city just a hop, skip and a long jump from the Georgia line since the Tennessee Aquarium opened on a deserted stretch of the Tennessee Riverfront in 1992.

One of the world's largest freshwater aquariums, with exhibits focusing on life in rivers and lakes from the Chattahoochee to the Congo, it's considered one of the top 10 aquariums in the U.S. From my perspective, I'd rank it No. 1 (sorry, New Orleans, Chicago and Monterey Bay.)

With river lore as the subject, the aquarium tells the story of a raindrop falling in the Appalachian Mountains and ending its journey in the Gulf of Mexico.

Major exhibits include the Appalachian Cove Forest, where songbirds share the space with unusual fish species such as the hog sucker; Delta Country, with Alligator Bayou as the centerpiece; Rivers of the World; the Tennessee River; and a favorite of nearly everyone, River Giants (ever seen a redtail catfish or a giant pangasius?).

If you insist on seeing the tropical coral reefs typical of most aquariums, the Ocean Journey exhibit occupies a second building (opened in 2005), but for me, the real excitement of the Tennessee Aquarium is its emphasis on freshwater life.

That, and its role in the development of Chattanooga's riverfront and points beyond.

What today's visitors find proves that there is life beyond Ruby Falls and Rock City, two iconic sights that were mandatory stops during the road trip era of the 1950s and '60s.

Even the iconic Chattanooga Choo Choo has had a facelift.

The train and its terminal station began operating in 1909, and by 1941 had become so much a part of pop culture that Glenn Miller and his Orchestra recorded its namesake swing tune featured in the movie "Sun Valley Serenade."

You never could "have your ham and eggs in Carolina" as that route was musical fantasy, but the train's spirit lives on.

The station complex features the Hotel Chalet, with restored train cars that make for a stylish sleep, along with entertainment venues from a comedy club to a caboose cantina.

Hotel Chalet / TNS

Renovated sleeping cars at the Hotel Chalet.

Ansley Suddeth Photography / TNS

Owner Keegan Chitwood, sitting outside of Petal and Pour.

Read House Hotel / TNS

Lobby of the Read House.

Ben Hon / TNS

The menu at Calliope features a fusion of Middle Eastern and Southern dishes.

I enjoyed a whiskey tasting at Gate 11, a lively bar in the spot occupied by the original train's gate. Pull up a stool and let owners Bill and Wanda Lee guide you through a tasting of their platinum-medal-winning gin, along with absinthe, rum, agave and a variety of whiskeys.

For a change of pace, plan to spend a morning exploring the Bluff View Art District. Overlooking the Tennessee River, even the air here smells artsy … OK, it actually smells of magnolia blossoms, but you get the idea.

Start with breakfast in the shaded courtyard of Rembrandt's Coffee, and between oohhing and aahhing at the cute babies in strollers and the cute dogs on leashes, you can concentrate on delicious pastries and gourmet coffee.

Then it's off to the Hunter Art Museum. Perched atop the bluff, the classical-style museum located in what was once a private home showcases a collection of American art from Colonial period paintings to contemporary glass.

Chattanooga's renaissance goes beyond art, culture and sports. Its food scene has also hit the refresh button.

For another elegant breakfast spot, pop into downtown's Petal and Pour, a combination bakery, flower emporium and upscale gift shop.

For something a bit (all right, a lot) more substantial, head to the Northshore District and Big Bad Breakfast, where James Beard Award-winning chef John Currence, owner of the iconic City Grocery in Oxford, Mississippi, puts together a bountiful breakfast found only in the South.

Dinner options are just as interesting. If you can't imagine a fusion of southern cooking and Middle Eastern cuisine, the Jordanian chef at Calliope will introduce you to dishes such as mushroom couscous and Gulf shrimp jazzed up with Moroccan spices, saffron, garlic, lemon and crispy pita.

For a different kind of culinary experience, Little Coyote is an ode to the chef's time in Texas. Yes, this is the place for smoked meats and tortillas. Be sure to ask the bartender to make you one of her specialty tequila concoctions.

For the best view of the Chattanooga skyline, book a table on the roof terrace of the Waymark Hotel at Iris, one of the city's most sophisticated dining experiences. Signature cocktails and small plates make for an elegant dinner, and if you're in the mood for a nightcap, head downstairs to the speakeasy in this former bank building's vault.

What is a city without a landmark hotel, and in Chattanooga that hotel is the Read House. The property – built in 1872, making it the oldest continuously operating hotel in the Southeast – is on the National List of Historic Places.

It has hosted practically every notable who has passed through Chattanooga, from the King of Rock and Roll (Elvis) to the King of the Crime World (Al Capone.) Elvis' stay was doubtless more enjoyable than that of Capone, who was confined here under lock and key during a federal trial.

Some guests are eager to book Room 311 in hopes of communing with the spirit of Annalisa Netherly, the Read House's resident ghost.

My room may not have had a ghost, but I was more than content with the large picture window offering a magnificent view of Lookout Mountain.

That mountain gazes down on a city that has – through revitalization – transformed itself into a must-see destination for any visitor to the Southeast.